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1000 copies, December 1999

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SIVANANDA

DAILY READINGS

Compiled From

THE WRITINGS OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

BY

SWAMI VENKATESANANDA

RADHA HOARE SUSAN THOMAS

GURUDEV'S SUBLIME TEACHINGS

The Uniqueness of man is mind & intellect. The power of reasoning, logic, analysis, investigation, research etc. are not be found among any other species of living beings in this planetary existence. Bondage and Liberation are ultimately the outcome of how human individual makes use of Supreme & Unique faculty. No wonder, therefore, our ancients declared that tge mind itself is the cause of man's bondage and maya as well as liberation through divine illumination. Therefore, the greatest importance has been given to the right cultivation of our mind through filling it with noble thoughts, Sublime sentiments, Soul elevating ideals and divine reflection & meditations.

The above process of Systematic & Scientific mind transformation is by engaging in the study of sacred Scriptures and Inspired Spiritual teachings of Sages & Saints. In the Vedanta , the Upanishad declares that spiritual study should never be neglected. 'The great world teacher Shnakaracharya reiterates this injunction. Maharshi Patanjali makes such study one of thr foundational practices for the Sadhaka, in his Yoga-Sutras. Such study is called Swadhyaya. It is indispensible spiritual food for the inner man, nurturing his quest after divine illumination (enlightment).

'SIVANANDA -Daily readings' , the compiler H.H.Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji Maharaj, a dear & esteemed spiritual brother of mine, has culled the invaluable essence of Beloved & Worshipful Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivananda's wisdom teachings in an invaluable spiritual reader arranged in the form of one page of Swadhyaya for each day of the 365 days of a year. He has done an inestimable service to the world of Spiritual Seekers. They are indeed fortunate.

Lastly, the GIDLSC organisers have done well in bringing out a new edition of this work, and thus making this treasure available to us all today.

It is certainly worth possessing. It also makes a wonderful gift. May all be happy.

Swami Chidananda

SIVANANDA , A DIVINE

INTERVENTION

The advent of His Holiness Swami Sivananda in the modern world is undoubtedly a phenomenon by itself. The current of human history often dashes against the right bank or the left bank of the river of evolution at different times in the context of relative experience. What is usually regarded as a Divine Incamation is only a nomen clature to signify the manifestaiton of the Rectifying orce of the Universal Harmony to bring about a balance between the movements of human nature, and nature in general.

Right from the beginning of the Twentieth Century there has been an accelerated march of scientific discoveries, especially in the field of astronomy and physics. Side by side, went an industrial revolution in society and the eagerness for greater comfort and ease pushed the button towards a disproportionately mechanised system of living with the help of gadgets and inventions of different types. It looked as if the human being got transformed of different types. It looked as if the human beong got transformed into almost a walking machine.

When the soul is dead, God also dies at the same time. For, God is the names we give to the Soul of the Cosmos. The soul is the quintessential essence of the bottom of thr being of anything. To imagine that structure can survive independent of the cohesive force which cements the various parts of the sturcture to give it the appearance of a whole, is to reach the height of illogicality in thought and outlook. The parts work together in collaboration, whether in the world outside, the body within or the society in the middle, because of there being Invisible Presence which eludes the grasp of even the highest rationality conceivable. It is at this hour, when the vehicle of life has gone out of gear, that the health – inu=fusing positive power of the Absolute takes some spatiotemporal form and does the needful in restoring the lost harmony, whether in art, sociology, politics or religion.

The coming of Swami Sivananda is such a divine intervention for worldsolidarity and mankind's peace. The "Daily Readings" from the teachings of such a Superman is bound to bring he needed guidance and solace to every seeker of the path of the Higher Life. The writings of this phenomenonal personality touch almost evry vital subject relating to man's inner and outer life. The vast range of this prolific literature is not easliy accessible to the reader, especially as many of the works have already gone out of print, and also the themes of the writings are too varied and extend over a very large area of study. The present arrangement of select passages from these profound writings intended for a daily reading is bound to provide to everyone a series of studies from the pages of the Book of Spiritual Life in general.

I joyfully commend this interesting and most helpful production to all aspirants treading the way of Life Eternal.

Swami Krishnananda

DEDICATED TO THE LOTUS FEET

OF GURUDEV SIVANANDA

Gods's cosmic love brings about the incarnation of His light in our midst. Such incarnations are our gurus, prophets and saviours. They don a human garb so that they can be approached by human beings. If they had unearthly personalities, then the common man would be scared away from them, and this would defeat their very purpose in descending on this earth.

Let us not forget that when we reer to Bhagavan Sivananda, it is not to his body that we refer to but of the divinty within him. We live in body consciousness but he lived in the body, conscious of God.

It is to that God, in that body that we pay our homage. That body was His temple Bhagavan Sivananda was not a 'human being'. He was an ideal. He was(is) the cosmic being. He is love infinite. He is love infinite. He is absolute selflessness. He is God consciousness. He is the light of self-knowledge.

The light of self-knowledge shone in every thought, word an deed that preceeded from him during his divine life on earth. His thoughts, words and deeds were in perfect accord. They are preserved in his recorded words. Through them God's own light and love shine, illumining the path of our life. In his words truth stands revealed.

Open the eyes of your heart. Let Gurudev Sivananda enshrined in your heart communicate his love and his light direct to your very soul. Read a page a day with faith, love and devotion. Your daily life will soon be transformed into a divine life of peace, bliss and the highest wisdom.

Dust of Gurudev's lotus feet

Swami Venkatesananda

1 JANUARY - REAL PEACE

How long do you want to live a life of duality? A life of restlessness and discontentment? How long do you wish to lead a life of ignorance, hatred, bitterness, and separation? How long do you wish to continue your own selfish struggles? How long do you wish to behold differences and distinctions? How long do you wish to keep the barriers between man and man?

You cry for shanti, for peace. But where to get it? Through whom to get it? Realise peace in your own heart through association with sages and by meditation. You can find this peace only in the stillness, only within your own self. You certainly cannot find it in objects. Look within.

Sit silently in a quiet room for one or two hours. Close your eyes and concentrate on the point between the eyebrows. Withdraw the mind and the senses from the external objects. Be still.

Silence the surging thoughts and the bubbling emotions. Forget the body. Forget the world. Enter into the great calm. Dive deep down into the recesses of your heart. Plunge into the ocean of peace. Now you can realise your oneness with the supreme self.

Be regular in your practice. This is of paramount importance. It is useless to talk of the cessation of war, whilst you are still full of petty hatred and jealousy. So first remove your own inharmonious vibrations. Then there will be no more war between nations. It is only the individuals that constitute a nation.

Lead a life of peace. Kill suspicion. Kill envy. Kill prejudice. Kill selfishness. Kill the greed for power and possession. Do this ruthlessly.

Lead a simple life. Practise daily meditation and establish peace in your own heart. Then you will radiate it to all who come in contact with you.

Mysterious is this peace. If you enjoy this peace, you will be contributing peace to the whole world. Realise the peace that passeth all understanding and be free.

2 JANUARY - LEARN LEARN LEARN

The world is for your education. You learn several lessons daily. If you learn all you can, if you utilise all opportunities to the best advantage, in the spirit of yoga, then your capacities and will-power will develop. You grow, you evolve, you expand.

There is eternal development - you are moving forward towards the goal. All veils drop down. All limitations and barriers are annihilated. All shackles or fetters are rent asunder. You receive more and more divine light, knowledge, purity, peace and spiritual strength.

You are the author of your fate. You yourself have created this. You yourself are entirely responsible for this. You are the maker of suffering and joy. Just as a silkworm has created a cocoon for its own destruction, so also you have created this cage of flesh, by your own karma (action), by attraction and repulsion, and false egoism.

You have become a slave of the flesh. You have become a slave of body and mind, of countless desires. You are sunk deep in the quagmire of samsara (ignorance). Do not sleep any longer. Awake. Come out of this illusory mayaic cage, now.

Cast aside the erroneous idea: "I am the body". Develop the consciousness and the realisation of the real "I" within you. Be aware of the Satchidananda Brahman, the atma, the supreme self, the one consciousness - that which connects all hearts together by a common thread.

Awaken yourself to the conscious realisation of your actual identity with the supreme self. Think of the self continuously. This will lead to self-realisation. The struggle must be keen. The endeavour must be sincere. The motive must be pure.

There must be iron discipline, iron determination, iron will and constant sadhana (practice). Then there is not a bit of difficulty in the attainment of the final beatitude of life. This life is sublime in its nature. It is resplendent with spiritual light. It is radiant with splendour. It is vibrant with ecstasy. It is replete with peace.

3 JANUARY - PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS

Difficulties exist only that you may grow strong by overcoming them. So overcome all difficulties, one by one, patiently. If you fail ten times, do not despair. If you fail a hundred times, do not be disheartened. If you fail a thousand times, rise up and march on boldly. Failures are indeed stepping-stones to success.

Watch your speech. Watch every word. Speak no word that is impure or vulgar, or that can affect the feelings of others. Never allow an unclean thought to enter your mind. If it does enter your mind, drive it out at once. Purify your mind so that an impure thought may not be able to gain entrance. Strengthen your resolve. Patiently perishist in your sadhana (spiritual practice).

Intensify your dispassion and yearning for liberation. Destroy your personal element. Forgive those who harm you. Give love for hatred. Overcome evil by good. Resist the promptings of the lower nature.

Make your body your obedient servant, your slave. Do not give up your sadhana simply because you do not make any progress. Struggle as long as you can each time. Each time you will be nearer to success.

Give, give, give. Giving is the very nature of love. Giving expands and purifies the heart. Ask for no return. Ask for no gratitude. Where there is no free giving, there is no room for God. Giving itself is the secret of abundance. Interest and attention will strengthen your will. Cultivate attention to a considerable degree.

Constantly repeat some inspiring verses from the Gita or the Upanishads. Constantly repeat some mantras such as: Om Satchidananda or Om Namo Narayanaya. This will be your divine background of thought: This will be a shield, to counteract the objectionable impure thoughts.

Follow these instructions carefully. You are sure to attain self-realisation here and now.

If you realise the one in all and the all in one, you are an illumined sage. Be serene in the oneness of things. All duality will disappear by itself. One alone is the living reality. All is illusory. All is maya's jugglery. One appears as the all. Reject, negate the all. Realise the one and be free.

4 JANUARY - LIFE IS ARTIFICIAL

Life has become very artificial. There is physical, mental and moral degeneration. You do not find robust, stalwart, healthy people. Longevity is unknown. Everywhere you see puny, stunted creatures with dilapidated frames and sickly appearance. They cannot even walk a short distance.

Children beget children. People die like moths. They have become weaklings, effeminate, impotent.

There is wholesale devastation by earthquake. Divorce courts are increasing. One nation is afraid of another nation. Each nation is suspecting the other nation of preparing for war. Life has become a matter of uncertainty. It has become a mass of confusion, chaos and bewilderment. It has become very stormy and boisterous. It is full of under-currents, cross-currents and mixed currents!

You can escape from these troubles and difficulties if you lead a life of dispassion, self-restraint, purity and selfless service; if you develop pure cosmic love; if you develop the habit of taking the right view, right thinking, right feeling, right acting, all with the right attitude - and if you practise devotion and meditation.

Dispassion must be of that type that is born of pure viveka (nitya-anitya vastu viveka - discrimination between the real and the unreal). This is a rare commodity, a rare virtue. Seek everlasting bliss and peace in the atman or the soul within by purifying the mind and practising meditation. This is the only remedy to get rid of the pains of samsara (worldly existence).

Be quick in taking to spiritual pursuits. Hairs are becoming grey. Teeth are falling. The senses are getting cold. Practise meditation while you are young. After retirement from service you can do nothing.

5 JANUARY - PRESENCE OF MIND

Just reflect for a while when you have failed in an attempt. Try to be more careful in the next attempt. Try to remove those factors that led you to fail previously. Fortify yourself now. Be careful and vigilant. Be active and nimble as the squirrel. Be quick and at the same time be capable and efficient. Do not commit mistakes.

Call forth all your latent energies or dormant faculties. When the house is on fire - how alert you are. How skilfully and promptly you act at that particular moment. You do not know where the power and the energy are flowing from at that time. You are fully concentrated. You contrive by skilful methods, then and there, to save your property and the lives of those dwelling in the house. You do marvellous actions and then, when the difficulty is over you say that some mysterious 'power of God' has worked through you!

Always cut the Gordian knot at once. Do not waste time. When once you have resolved on a definite line of action, carry it out dexterously, with a cool and calculating deliberation and consideration. Procrastination is the thief of time. One who procrastinates can never succeed in life, or in any of his undertakings.

The vast majority of persons, even so-called 'educated' people, have no definite aim in life. They drift here and there like a log of wood on a restless ocean. They do not know what to do. After finishing their B.A. or M.A. courses students do not know how to proceed. They do not have power of judgement to select any good vocation that is suitable to their temperament, that will bring them prosperity in life. They become lazy. They are not suitable for any kind of speculative business or any kind of activity demanding knack, pluck and skill.

In persons of this sort, those who waste their time and energy, they finish their life's career in gloom, despair and sorrow. The energy, the intellect are there but they have no ideal, no clear-cut programme of life. Their life is a failure.

Clearly understand the purpose of life. Then chalk out the line of work that is congenial to your aim. Live up to your ideal. You can realise the ideal right now, this very second. But if you walk with faltering steps it will take ten years. The ideal must be there and then you can develop your will.

6 JANUARY - BECOME DYNAMIC

If a man feels even a little bit for his present deplorable condition; if he attempts even to show a slight improvement; if there is a little receptive attitude; then he can be corrected and he can make progress on the path of yoga. If he is obstinate and pigheaded, if he is absolutely self-willed, if he deliberately shuts his eyes or hardens his heart against the truth or divine light - then no one can help him.

The aspirant should give his full consent, he should consent with all his being (sarva bhava) for the change of his lower nature into divine nature. He must make total, unreserved, ungrudging self-surrender to the Lord or the guru. He must have the true spirit and he must have perishistent endeavour. Then only the real change will come.

Yoga can be practised only by those who are very earnest about it and who are ready to annihilate their little ego and its demands. There are no half measures on the spiritual path. Rigid discipline of the senses, and the mind, rigorous tapas (penance) and constant meditation, are necessary for the attainment of God-realisation.

The hostile forces are ever ready to overwhelm you if you are not vigilant, if you give the least sanction, or the smallest opening for them. Yoga cannot be practised if you cling to your little self, your old habits, your old unregenerate and self-assertive lower nature.

You cannot lead a double life. Pure divine life, the life of yoga, cannot co-exist with a mundane life of passion and ignorance. Rise above the petty human level to the higher level of divine consciousness.

You cannot claim freedom for your petty mind and little ego if you want to become a yogi. The lower nature with its retinue of arrogance, ignorance, and turbulence, stands in the way of the descent of divine light.

Know the truth, the absolute. Then you are saved, you are liberated, you are enlightened, you are free. You can know Brahman only by becoming Brahman. To become Brahman is to identify yourself with the supreme soul which constitutes your divine nature. The river joins the ocean and becomes one with it. The drop mixes with the sea and becomes one with the sea.

7 JANUARY - THE SPIRITUAL PATH

Youth is the best time, the most fitting time in a man's life, to devote himself to spiritual aspiration and sadhana (spiritual practice). The spiritual life is practical from beginning to end. The love for the ideal should be single-minded and whole-hearted.

The spiritual path is an unknown path which is as straight and narrow as a razor. On it there is no other light than that of faith and divine grace to guide the aspirant. There is no other sustenance than devotion.

The track ahead cannot be seen. The going is uncertain. And many pitfalls await the unwary. The traveller, the aspirant, must travel in the dark. He must march courageously forward. He will reach great illumination at the journey's end.

The spiritual path demands complete mastery over the flesh. Proceed gradually. Intensify the aspiration you have. Have a keen thirst for the realisation of the supreme. Keep alive thy aspiration, undiminished and bright. Be thou firm in thy faith.

Empty thy heart of all earthly things. The spiritual life is a life of child-like simplicity. What is needed in spiritual life is a sincere aspiration for the life of the spirit. It needs an earnest dedication to it. And it needs a whole-souled devotion and application to the realisation of the ideal. Your heart must be solely and entirely centred on God. It must be centred on God alone - deeply, passionately and steadily.

Be sincere to thy very core. This is the most essential thing. Spiritual life is based on the complete conquest of the lower nature. Upon this pedestal of perfect self mastery and right conduct, the edifice of godliness and divine life may be built. May thy spiritual life and example inspire one and all.

Man wants a fuller life. He lives for a fuller life. That is life in eternal Brahman. Life is an endless series of awakenings. Understand life of harmony and peace. Life holds the key. Unlock the mystery of your own being and attain life eternal.

8 JANUARY - SINNER TODAY SAINT TOMORROW

Critical times test the faith of the devotee. He who has faith in the Lord must pass through the fire of suffering. Suffering is not misfortune; it helps one to grow. Suffering and pain open the door to wisdom. "Not to be hurt by others", is more difficult than, "not to hurt others". Blessed are those that suffer because suffering helps them to evolve quickly – suffering is the substance of spiritual life.

The individual soul is a business man - his karmas (actions) are his commerce - good and bad fruits of his good and bad actions are his profit and loss. The world is his business house. Think well and judge what is right before you act. Involuntary, unintentional or unconscious actions do not constitute karma, because volition is the most important factor in determining karma, and here it is absent. Sin is only a mistake, mis-directed energy. Mistakes are lessons in wisdom. The essence of evil and sin is belief in things that perish.

The essence of religion is truth and the essence of law is virtue. Two birds, inseparable friends, cling to the same tree. One of them eats sweet and bitter fruits and the other watches without eating. The tree is the body. One bird is the individual soul who enjoys the fruits of his actions - pleasure and pain. The other bird is the Lord, who remains as a witness without eating.

Respect of the soul is praiseworthy. Respect of the body is despicable. A scientist conquers external nature but a yogi conquers the mind and internal nature. The sinner of today is the saint of tomorrow. Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future.

Your goal is God. Your centre is God. Your ideal is God. Turn back to God and realise everlasting bliss. Resting on him you will be saved. As the lamp cannot burn without oil, so too, you cannot live without God. God is within you all the time, inspiring you, lifting you up. Withdraw.

Aspire.

Meditate. Realise.

9 JANUARY - THE PEAK OF PERFECTION

You can climb the peak of perfection through resolute will, intense dispassion, renunciation and rigorous Meditation. Sublime divine thought is very powerful, it is a dynamic transmuting force. Diligently seek the path of truth; tread it carefully and vigilantly, for you may slip and fall. Love is harmlessness, kindness, compassion. Nothing can tempt you if you are regular in meditation. He who is pure at heart has already found divinity. Renunciation of egoism is the direct way to the eternal.

Knowledge of the imperishable bestows perfect freedom and independence. Where egoism is, immortality is not; where immortality is, egoism is not. Concentration will give you great power. Collect the scattered rays of the mind. Lust and greed make you a spiritual bankrupt. Purity and meditation bestow on you inexhaustible divine wealth.

A yogi becomes the master-builder of the temple of truth. Pass through the gate of wisdom - you will reach the illimitable domain of eternal bliss. He who is endowed with discrimination and power and concentration climbs rapidly to the peak of illumination. Your real guru (preceptor) is your own heart - he is the indweller, the inner ruler.

Longing for final liberation is the hunger for the spiritual food of knowledge of the eternal. Mind is the mirror through which the eternal appears as the universe of names and forms. Be in the world - not of the world. This is the highest yoga. this is the eternal wisdom. The wise man is ever eager to learn, he never poses as a teacher.

This visible world is the mirror of the invisible Brahman. You are a slave of circumstances because you do not meditate regularly. You will easily get illumination in solitude. Solitude has its own charms - prepare yourself for life in seclusion. Control and preserve energy through silence, brahmacharya (celibacy) and pranayama (yoga breathing), - you will have wonderful meditation. Love that man who dislikes you - you will grow strong. Money wasted can be restored, but time wasted is lost forever. Find out your centre - that centre is perfect harmony, eternal bliss, your own immortal soul.

10 JANUARY - THE FOUNDATION OF ETHICS

Put yourself in the place of others. Learn this great secret. What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others. The doctrine of unity of the Atman (the self), is the foundation of morality.

No one tries to harm himself. How can one, who knows that each and every being is his own self, harm anyone?

Share what you have with others. This is vedanta. Aparigraha (non covetousness) is a very important item in the practice of yama or self-restraint, in raja yoga of Patanjali. Aparigraha is non-receiving of gifts, it is freedom from covetousness. This leads to purity of thought and independence.

The purer you are, the nearer to God you will be. A pure heart is the most essential thing required for good health of body and mind, and for attaining God realisation. Religion resides only in the pure heart. Only the simple can be pure. He who is pure in heart attains God-realisation.

Humility is a fundamental virtue. It is the secret of the saints. He who lives the life of humility and simplicity, earns the supreme bliss of eternity. Humility is freedom from self-conceit.

Obliterate the sense of I-ness. Obliterate the idea of, "I am doing" or, "I will do". You are on the way to infinity. You will take the plunge into the ocean of divine wisdom and love.

You are not the doer. Do not think of the good deeds you have done and do not even expect any thanks for what you do. If you help a man, never remember it and if a man helps you, never forget it.

Spiritual life and devotion to God are essential for preventing a feeling of frustration in life. In the realm of perfection, harmony, peace and freedom, is the abode of Brahman. Reach this abode through purity, love, and meditation. Go to the source of life itself. You will know everything.

11 JANUARY - ANALECTS OF SIVANANDA

Solitude is the soul's best friend. Silence is better than argument. He is really blessed who can suit his temper to any circumstances. Grief destroys strength, health, intellect and wisdom. Conquer grief through discrimination, enquiry, and the meditation on the atman (self).

Worry is a waste. Avoid it. Rather sing, pray, meditate, enquire, cogitate and discriminate. Dive into the Bhagavad Gita. You will become fearless. You will rise above all worries.

Idleness is the enemy of peace of the soul. Stop complaining. Be thankful that there is a perfect law of health, to which everyone has access. Obey that law and be happy. Practise asanas - especially siddhasana, sarvangasana and sirshasana this will enable you to get control over the vital energy. If your mind is cool and your heart is full, then the entire world will be cool too.

Replace doubt, despair and hate, with faith, hope and love. Have plenty of common sense. Think quickly and carry out your decisions resolutely in times of emergency. Change is painful but ever needful. God chooses the meek and the innocent to achieve his will.

Many talk like philosophers and sages - but they live like fools. Veil after veil has to be lifted. The illusions of life are to be torn away before life divine can be attained.

Life is a perpetual struggle. It is a perpetual dying until you are face to face with God. Man is verily the sacrifice. Nature is the ladder on which we climb up to the Lord. Do not have a sad face - you will affect others.

Be cheerful always. Rejoice. Radiate joy and cheer. Radiate health and light. Let your eyes ever shine with the light of supreme love. The reality of love-tears is not in the eyes but in the heart of love.

"God is Truth. God is Love. God is Peace. God is Bliss.

God and God's law are one.

The Law and the Law-giver are one.

God is the law himself, He never breaks his laws.

God and his law abide everywhere and govern everything.

Glory to God. Glory to God."

12 JANUARY - ELUSIVE HAPPINESS

Man wants happiness. He tries to get it from money, from power, from woman, from son, from position, and so on. He rushes from one thing to another trying to find happiness. He gets knocks, blows, failure and disappointment. He laughs, dances, weeps and mourns. His senses get exhausted. He gets disgust for objects. Eventually, he experiences that sense objects are illusory, and that real lasting happiness cannot be found in them.

Man feels the need for a particular object. He tries to get it. If he succeeds, he is delighted for a moment. If he fails, he is sunk in despair and sorrow; he is gloomy and depressed. If he loses an object, he becomes very miserable.

As soon as one want is gratified, another new want crops up. There is no end to his wants. Cares, worries, anxieties and fear co-exist with wants and desires. Want is the product or offspring of ignorance. Brahman is all-full. All wants are satisfied in Brahman.

The restlessness of the mind is kept up by all these wants. He who wants nothing is a mighty emperor of the world. Sri Sankara says: "That carefree saint, who moves about with a kowpeen or loincloth only, without possessions, without the idea of ownership, without any wants, is the most happy person in the world." Wants and desires can be eradicated by self-realisation only.

Any number of zeros have no value unless you add a '1' before them. Similarly, even if you possess the wealth of the whole world, it is nothing if you do not lead a spiritual life, if you have no spiritual wealth, if you have no self-realisation.

You will have to add the atman to the life here. That is why the Lord Jesus says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you”.

Mind is greater than the senses. Pure intellect is greater than the mind. Atman is greater than the intellect. There is nothing greater than atman.

Brahman is without senses, mind, and prana. He is within and without all beings. He is immovable. He is extremely subtle. He is the light of all lights.

13 JANUARY - AVOID EXTREMES

The mind always wants to be doing something. When it attaches itself to the objects it cherishes, the mind feels amused and happy. There can be attraction without attachment. You can be attracted to a beautiful rose, but you are not attached to it. Attachment comes after possession and enjoyment.

Attachment, love, ananda (bliss), all go together. You are attached to your wife and children and so on. You love them because they give you ananda. As this world is illusory and as, through this illusion, pain appears as pleasure, you must cut as under all worldly attachments ruthlessly. Direct your love and attachment towards the reality, towards Brahman, towards the substratum which lies at the back of all objects, which is the witness of all activities taking place in the buddhi (intellect).

It is difficult to divert the mind which from early childhood has fallen into the pernicious habit of seeking external pleasures and which continues to do so unless you give it something superior to be amused with. Intellectual pleasure is far superior to sensual pleasure. So too, ananda (joy from meditation) is far superior to intellectual pleasure. Spiritual bliss gained from self-realisation, is infinite, immeasurable, unbounded. It is anandaghana (a solid mass of bliss).

Keep the mind in a state of moderation. The mind likes always to run to extremes. It runs either to extreme joy or extreme depression. Extremes meet and bring about a reaction. In excessive joy the mind cannot be calmed. Hence let the mind always be calm and cheerful.

Ghee (clarified butter) has two states - solid and liquid. So it is with the mind. In the waking state it is solid and in the deep sleep state it is liquid. In the solid state it is limited and gross. This is why it has finite experiences. In the liquid state it is limitless and so the jiva (soul) experiences the homogeneous and limitless bliss. In the deep sleep state there is no ego, no desire, hence it experiences the limitless bliss of the atman.

14 JANUARY - CONTROL YOUR DESIRES

In this ocean of samsara (worldly existence) desires are like crocodiles. Kill them as soon as they arise on the surface of the mind. Do not yield to them; do not become despondent about all the trials that beset you. Make friends with the pure (satvic) mind and destroy the impure mind with the help of the pure mind. Make the mind rest in the ever-blissful atman.

When a desire arises in your mind, consult your discrimination. That will tell you, at once, that desire is attended with pain, that only vairagya (dispassion) and tyaga (renunciation) will bring you satisfaction and peace of mind. It will advise you to renounce desire immediately. It will advise you to take up the study of the Upanishads, to repeat OM and to meditate in a solitary place. Think deeply whether this new desire will give you happiness or spiritual gain. You must starve out the obnoxious desires by not allowing the mind to dwell on such desires.

You have no desire for a thing until you know what it is like. Only after you have seen it, tasted it, or touched it, will you know what it is like, will you have a longing for it. Therefore do not touch, taste or see anything that is likely to taint the imagination. Put down vicious desires through virtuous desires. Then give up virtuous desires, through one strong desire. And that is the desire for God. In the long run you will even have to abandon this desire for God. Kill the thoughts, practise thoughtlessness. In this way you destroy desire.

Free yourself from the crocodile of desires. Do not be disheartened. Cheer yourself up. Stand like a lion. Destroy the impure mind with the pure mind. Make friends with - the satvic (pure) mind and rest peacefully in the atman.

THE INNER BATTLE
"The soldier fights for a few hours only,
But the aspirant's battle goes on day and night.
It is verily a hard battle, a fierce battle
And it lasts till the end of his life.
This battle is raging in the field of the mind.
Satva (purity) fights with rajas (impurity) and tamas (inertia),
Higher mind wages war with the lower mind.
Contentment fights with greed,
Patience fights with anger.
Brahmacharya (celibacy) fights with lust,
Humility fights with pride.
Fight, my brother, valiantly.
Raise the sword of Ram Nam (the divine name)
So says Sivananda”

15 JANUARY - SELF RELIANCE

Pure reason urges a man to self-reliance. For this reason the great founders and eminent teachers of all religions, have repeatedly proclaimed the need for recognising the Godhead within and for self-reliance in the last resort, rather than texts, persons or customs.

Self-control is greatest in the man whose life is dominated by ideals and general principles of conduct. The final end of moral discipline is self-control. The whole nature of man must be disciplined. Each element requires its specific training. Discipline harmonises the opposing elements in him. Self-control will enable the aspirant to know the truth, to desire the good, and to win the right - and thus to realise the reality.

Discipline is the training of our faculties, through instructions and through exercise, in accordance with some settled principle of authority. You must discipline not only the intellect but also the will and the emotions.

A disciplined man controls his actions. He is no longer at the mercy of the moment. He ceases to be a slave of his impulses and senses (indriyas). Such mastery is not the result of one day's effort. It is acquired only by protracted practice and daily self-discipline. You must learn to refuse the demands and impulses of your lower nature. A self-controlled man is able to resist wrong actions, towards which a worldly man is most strongly impelled.

Discipline yourself and grow strong. Stand unshaken. Rest in the atman (the immortal blissful soul). Perfection is not impossible of achievement. It is within the easy reach of human endeavour. All desires are fulfilled after self-realisation.

If you lack wisdom, ask God sincerely and he will give you wisdom. Physical health, intellectual understanding, moral integrity and spiritual wisdo

16 JANUARY - MAN OF SELF-CONTROL

Men of self-control become sinless and fearless. They acquire great results. Every sort of excitement is effortlessly controlled by self-control. The enemies of the self-controlled man are seen by him - they are lust, anger, desire - as if they dwell in a separate body.

The self-controlled man becomes desirous of liberation. He quietly bears present joys and sorrows and griefs; he is never overjoyed or depressed by prospective ones. He is devoid of all vindictiveness and guile. He is unaffected by praise or censure.

A self-controlled man is well-balanced. He has good manners, purity and fortitude. He is a perfect master of his passions. He is devoted to universal benevolence. He never feels animosity for anyone. He is tranquil, wise and cheerful.

A self-controlled man is endowed with intelligence. He gains universal reverence. He fears no creature and in return he is feared by no creature.

Overcoming lust and anger, practising the vow of brahmacharya (celibacy) and becoming a complete master of the senses the holy one patiently waits. Practising the austerest of penances and observing the most rigid of restraints, he lives in the world and calmly waits the time. He is like somebody who has a body and yet seems to know that he is not subject to destruction.

Meditation is freeing the mind from all objects and thoughts of sensual enjoyment. If this is done then God-realisation comes of itself. God will enthrone himself in your heart and meditation will come of itself. If you bring a light into a cave which has been dark for thousands of years, the darkness will vanish at once, by itself. You do not have to strive to drive the darkness away. If you attempt to put your hand into a pot which is filled with dust and dirt, you cannot. But if you empty it, then you can easily put your hand into the pot. Even so, if you empty the mind of all its dust and dirt, God will enter into it in the twinkling of an eye.

17 JANUARY - DISCIPLINE OF SPEECH

Tame your tongue - it is an unruly devil. Sacrifice, gift, austerity, the study of the sacred scriptures, truthfulness - all these will help you to develop virtuous conduct. Practise austerity of speech. Whatever you speak must be truthful and beneficent.

Do not utter anything that will give annoyance to anybody. A thoughtless man who has not controlled his organ of speech and who speaks at random, is entangled in the foolishness of his own words. Therefore be very careful when you speak.

Speak little. Think twice, think ten times before you speak. Weigh the words carefully, before they come out of your mouth. Speak only words which can do good to others. Always be polite and courteous. Never speak in a harsh tone, never hurt the feelings of others.

Do not talk much. Become a man of measured words. God has given you two ears and two eyes. But He only gave you one tongue, so that you may hear and see more than you speak. Lingual diarrhoea is a terrible disease.

Words exist for the transmission of ideas. Words and ideas are inseparable; they are like fire and its heat, or like ice and its coldness. Be careful in the selection of your words. They can produce violent disturbance in the feelings of others. Speak only those words which give happiness and comfort to others.

Think more. Do much. Speak measured words. Let your tongue never utter an unkind word, or a harsh word. Let it never speak sharp criticism. An undisciplined tongue is a sword that cuts others' hearts. It produces a wound that will never heal, even in a lifetime.

Observe silence. You will have abundant energy. You will conserve your energy this way. You will enjoy peace of mind and good health. You will be able to turn out more work. Silence is soothing for brain and nerves.

Your goal is God. Your centre is God. Your ideal is God. Turn back to God and realise everlasting bliss. Resting on Him you will be saved. As the lamp cannot burn without oil, so too, you cannot live without God. God is within you all the time, inspiring you, lifting you up. Withdraw. Aspire. Meditate. Realise.

18 JANUARY - OBSERVE SILENCE

Use measured words in talking. Do not talk much. Try to finish a conversation within a few minutes. Understand the nature of the man rightly. When he enters your office or house for an interview speak politely and with great respect for the man. Then send him away immediately and conserve your energy.

Do not indulge in long unnecessary talks and discussions. Man is a social animal. He is prone to much talking. He is very garrulous. This talkative habit is ingrained in him and he is much troubled when he cannot get any company. He does not want to go in for seclusion.

The observance of mauna (silence) is death and capital punishment for him. Ladies are still more garrulous. They always create some kind of unnecessary quarrels in the house.

I always prescribe the practice of mauna for one and all, as this helps in the preservation of energy, development Of will and enjoyment of peace. All sorts of quarrels, misunderstandings, anger, etc., can be easily avoided by mauna for two hours daily and for six hours on Sundays, and for a full week on long holidays.

Even during other periods talk very few words. When you speak, speak gently and sweetly. During mauna you must live alone. Do not mix with other people. Do not even express your ideas with gestures.

The other channel by which energy is wasted, is the mind. This wastage is due to loose thinking, worrying, anger and fear. Just as energy is wasted in too much talk, so also energy is wasted in loose thinking.

If this mental energy is conserved, you will have at your disposal a tremendous store of energy. This you can utilise for various other purposes and sadhana (spiritual practice). If this energy is conserved you will feel that you are very powerful. You will feel no exhaustion even if you turn out tremendous work.

To do this you have to watch your thoughts very carefully, by introspection and meditation. You will have to divert the mental energy to useful thinking. There will be some struggle in the beginning. But after some time the mind will naturally think of auspicious and useful items.

19 JANUARY - FEAR

Fear is a great human curse. It is your worst enemy. Fear assumes many forms and blights many lives. But a calm mind brings courage. Then you will face the trials and difficulties of the spiritual path without fear, Fearlessness is a divine quality. What is fear? It is an imaginary zero; it is maya's deception. It is a mental delusion. It is a negative modification that arises in the mind-lake when one forgets his real, divine nature. It is a whirlpool that emanates from the chitta (mind) when one has lost his power of vichara (enquiry) and discrimination. It is the dark wave that proceeds from the ocean of antahkarana (mind) when one has intense attachment to the body.

Friends, there is nothing to fear really. Fear is due to acceptance of suggestion. Victory over fear really means victory over the thing that we fear. We attract to ourselves the very things we are afraid of. That is the universal law of nature. You need not be afraid of anything else in this world save fear itself.

Auto-suggestion helps a lot in removing fear. Assert the truth of being. Assert, "Nothing in the three worlds can make me afraid. I am absolutely fearless. My will is strong and irresistible." Make friends with the threatened experience, or the things you do not like. The raja yoga method is to repeat the formula: " I am courageous" or "OM courage". In the morning meditate on the virtue of courage.

The devotee's method is to pray to God with faith and sincerity and to make perfect self-surrender: "O God, make me fearless. Grant me the virtue of courage. O Mother take thy son in thy lap. Thou art fear; thou art courage. Let me see thee alone in all these forms". Feel the invisible helping hand of the ishta devata (your own deity). Have strong faith. Real strength lies in fearlessness. Remove fear of all sorts.

The vedantic method is to enquire: "Who am I?" Identify yourself with the inner self. Assert: "I am the embodiment of courage - I am immortal atman - I am not this perishable body. Who is to fear whom when all this is the self?" This will destroy fear to its very root. How peaceful and strong are they who have victory over fear. May we all shine in divine glory, radiating courage all around. May the divine splendour, the brahmic aura shine in all faces and remove the darkness of fear, ignorance and terror. May we all attain that state of absolute fearlessness - brahmi sthiti (the state of Brahman). May we become one with the fearless Brahman.

20 JANUARY - BE COURAGEOUS

Man creates trouble and misery for himself. Give up all sorts of fears. Stand up like a lion. Draw courage from within. There are many people who are so timid that they will not move around at night. Even when they see a cat at night, they tremble. What a shame.

They are embodiments of timidity. They are 'moustache ladies'. There are some sanyasins (monks) who repeat: "SHIVOHAM SHIVOHAM" ("I am Siva") – but they tremble with fear when they are put to a little test. They perspire and quiver when there is any impending danger!

They are poor, miserable specimens. I always say that a dacoit can become a good Vedantin, if his energy is turned in a spiritual direction, because he is absolutely fearless and has no deha adhyasa, (feeling "I am the body"); but not a timid man.

Fearlessness is the greatest qualification for a spiritual aspirant. All fears are imaginary. They have no real basis. When you think seriously they will melt away like snow before the sun. Think a tiger or a lion has come in front of you, and you will have to face it. Think that you are placed in front of a machine gun, and that you will be blown up right now. Draw courage now. Think of the verses of the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. They deal with the immortality of the soul. Again and again think of the divine verses of the Avadhut Gita. You will become courageous – though perhaps not all at once. Gradually you will find that you are gaining courage.

Constantly think that you are the atman, the self. You will gradually develop great courage. Worry and fear are fearful forces within us. They poison the sources of life; they destroy all harmony, vitality and vigour. Thoughts of cheerfulness, joy, and courage are healing and soothing.

Just as darkness cannot exist in the presence of light, so also fear cannot exist in the presence of self-denial or self-realisation or courage. Exhibit undaunted spirit, intrepidity and manliness. Make a strong resolve: "I will die or realise the self”. Give up the idea that you are the body. Fearlessness is one important sign of a liberated being.

21 JANUARY - IMAGINARY OBSTACLES

Many people develop worries by falsely imagining that they are inferior to others. The idea of inferiority or superiority brings trouble and worries. Ideas of superiority and inferiority are mental creations only they are illusory.

Differences are unreal. Never think that you are inferior to anybody. Never think that you are superior to anybody. You will begin to treat others with contempt when you think that you are superior to them. Remove these ideas from your mind. They are the cause of useless worry.

By constant meditation and concentration, you will have to divert the mind from worry. If you have contentment then worry can be easily destroyed. Get rid of all sorts of mental weaknesses, superstitions, false and wrong imaginings; fear and other wrong samskaras (mental impressions).

When desires arise in the mind, try not to fulfil them. Gradually, by constant practice, desires can be reduced. Then, if you stop all the desires, you can also destroy worry. In this way you will conserve your energy.

Now come imaginary phobias and fears of all sorts. Energy leaks out in these directions also. Man thinks: "I will develop pneumonia. I have already got a fever and a cough." He gets unnecessary fear in this way. Any disease is intensified by thinking about it. An ordinary ailment becomes severe by entertaining unnecessary fear.

Another man is afraid of criticism. If any man calls you a dog, why do you become furious? You do not develop four legs straight away, do you? But now you begin to fight him. Your eyes become red, you retaliate. You call him a donkey. Then he gets irritated. He fights back and you both end up deadly enemies. This is not good. Practise vichara (enquiry) and you will find that all this is nothing.

22 JANUARY - DON'T BE WEAK

Shyness is a great hindrance in life. It is a form of timidity or low fear. Almost all boys have got this weakness - and yet this is a feminine quality. Shyness manifests when one is in the wrong path. Every woman knows that the goal of life is God realisation, and yet she engages herself in sexual matters. This wrong action makes her shy when she appears before any man.

A shy boy or man cannot express his thoughts boldly. He cannot look directly into the eyes of another man. He cannot freely approach any stranger. A shy man does not get on well in business or in the office.

Modesty is not shyness. It is decency or chastity. This comes from politeness and polish of character. Those who are shy should try to talk with others boldly. They should look directly at the face of others. Shyness is a great weakness. It should be eradicated quickly by cultivating courage.

Timidity is another weakness, due to faintheartedness. It is a form of fear, akin to shyness. A timid man has a chicken-heart. He is unfit for any public activity and for any kind of adventurous work.

A timid man cannot become successful in life, he cannot deal boldly with his customers in business. A timid man is afraid of losing his life. He is much attached to his wife, children and property. He is afraid of public opinion.

A timid man cannot talk even a few words with force and emphasis. So eradicate timidity. Eradicate it by developing courage. For timidity is a curse - and it weakens a man.

Pessimism is a temper of mind that looks too much on the dark side of things. It is the doctrine in which the whole world is bad rather than good. This is very depressing. Vedantins are wonderful optimists. Though they say that the world is unreal and they talk on dispassion, this is to create a distaste for the worthless life of this world, and to create a taste for the immortal, blissful life in Brahman.

The opposite of pessimism is optimism. which always looks on the bright side.

23 JANUARY - RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Carelessness and forgetfulness are two evil qualities that stand in the way of success for a man. A careless man cannot do any action in a proper manner. These qualities are born of tamas (inertia). Application and tenacity are unknown to a man of carelessness. His superiors soon get displeased with a man who is careless and forgetful. There is a lack of attention in him.

Develop a strong desire to remove these two defects and to develop carefulness and a good memory. This is important. Then the will and the subconscious mind will do the work for you. Tie the key in your handkerchief as soon as you lock the door. Keep your money in the inside pocket. Keep your spectacles in the side-pocket. Always count the packages whenever you go out. Keep accounts regularly. Daily make a small note of items you have to attend to.

Many people are always diffident. They have no self-confidence. They have energy, capacity and faculties but they have no confidence in their own powers and faculties, in their ability to attain success. This is a kind of weakness that brings failures in all attempts.

A man appears on the platform to deliver a lecture. He is a capable man and he is well learned, but he is diffident. He foolishly thinks that he cannot produce an impressive speech. The moment this negative thought occupies his mind, he becomes nervous - he stutters and stammers. This failure is only due to his lack of self-confidence.

You may have little capacity and yet you must have full confidence that you will succeed in your attempt. There are people who have very little material and little capacity, and yet they thrill the audience. This is due to their confidence. "I will succeed", they say, or, "I am fully confident of my success".

Never leave room for the negative quality of diffidence to enter your mind. Know what your real worth is. A man of confidence is always successful in all his attempts.

24 JANUARY - AIDS TO SUCCESS

Develop equal-vision. Live in the true spirit of the Bhagavad Gita: "Sages look equally on a brahmana (holy one) adorned with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog and even an outcast." Where is superiority and inferiority when you behold the self everywhere? Change your angle of vision and rest in peace.

The heart must be beautiful. Face the storm and triumph over it. Do not shrink from the battle of life, but fight it and come out victorious. Face abuse, insult, dishonour, disgrace, malice with a smile on your face. Be calm and serene. Take up all events in life as though you are a silent witness, never being perturbed at all.

Depression is an evil quality. People have plenty of money, and yet they are always depressed. They put on a morose, peevish appearance. They are always gloomy. This is a dangerous epidemic disease. The gloomy man spreads gloom and depression everywhere. He cannot apply himself to any kind of work. He is idle and lethargic.

Depression will deplete all energy. Think of the virtue of cheerfulness. Have a mental picture of joy and the habit of cheerfulness will develop around this mental picture. Smile and laugh. Give a smile to everybody you meet on the road. That man who always keeps a cheerful countenance radiates joy to others.

Some are not able to decide anything definite in certain important matters. They have not got independent power of judgement. They simply prolong the matter. They do not come to a definite positive decision. A man who has indecision will never succeed. He will be full of doubts and fears.

Procrastination is the friend of indecision. The opportunity will slip away. It will be too late to gather honey when the winter comes! You must think over the matter for some time. Then come to a definite decision. At once you must apply your will and try to put the matter into execution. Then only you will succeed.

25 JANUARY - DESTROY THE ROOTS OF SUFFERING

Determination and self-reliance are very necessary for success in self-realisation. In the Mundaka Upanishad you will find: "This atman cannot be obtained by one who is destitute of strength, or without earnestness, or by penance without mark. But if a wise man strives after it by those means, then his self enters into Brahman".

Fearlessness is an important qualification for the aspirant. You should be prepared to renounce your life at any moment. Without renunciation of the little sensual life, the eternal spiritual life cannot be attained. Every difficulty that comes in the spiritual path is an opportunity to grow stronger and to develop will power.

When you have once decided to take up the spiritual path, stick to it at any cost, nay, at the risk of your life. Thou art the immortal self. Be bold. Stand up. Gird up your loins. Realise the truth. Proclaim it everywhere.

Wrong thinking is the root cause of human suffering. Cultivate right thinking and right action. Think always: "I am the immortal self". This is right thinking. Work unselfishly for the poor, but work only in terms of unity, with atma bhava (seeing. the one self in all). This is right acting.

There is no such thing as sin. Sin is only a mistake. Sin is a mental creation. The baby soul must commit some mistakes during the process of evolution. Mistakes are your best teachers. Think always: "I am pure atman". Then the idea of sin will be blown in the air.

Do not say, "Oh it is karma, my karma. It is my karma (fate) that has brought me to this". No. Exert. Do tapas (penance). Concentrate. Meditate. Purify. Do not be. a fatalist. Do not yield to inertia. Do not bleat like a lamb. Roar "OM OM OM" like a lion.

Adhere to the daily spiritual routine. Apply yourself with zeal and enthusiasm to sadhana (spiritual practice). Become a naistic brahmacari (lifelong celibate). Be steady and systematic in your yoga abhyasa (practice of yoga).

Shine in your native, pristine glory. Become a jivanmukta (liberated sage). You are the children of immortality and light. "TAT TWAM ASI - Thou Art That, my dear children.

26 JANUARY - THE GOLDEN MEDIUM

Some people are over-credulous. This is bad, as they are easily cheated by others. You must fully understand man. You must know his nature, his qualities and his antecedents. You must know his behaviour. Test him on several occasions and only place your confidence in him when you are fully satisfied.

He may be a deep man who puts on a false appearance and who turns out to be quite the reverse. Watch him closely, move with him closely and hear about him from several other people. Man cannot hide his nature for long. You will see that his face registers all his inner feelings and thoughts.

Too much suspicion is also bad. It is the opposite of over-credulousness. Mind always moves in extremes. The husband suspects the wife and the wife suspects the husband. There is always trouble in the house.

If the proprietor suspects his servants, then how can business go on? It cannot. The world runs on perfect faith. Business too runs on faith. If people are too suspicious there is always friction and rupture. Do not be over-credulous or over-suspicious. Keep the golden medium always.

Another undesirable quality is intolerance, or petty mindedness. All the restlessness and fighting in this world takes its origin from intolerance. An Englishman is intolerant towards an Irishman or a German. A Hindu is intolerant to a Mohammedan and vice versa. Arya Samajist is intolerant towards a Sanatanist and vice versa. All this is due to perfect ignorance.

How can a man, who sees the one atman in all, be intolerant? All these small differences are purely mental creations. Expand. Embrace all. Include all. Love all. Serve all. Behold the Lord in all.

See God in every face. Feel his indwelling presence in all. Be liberal and catholic in your views. Destroy the barriers that separate man from man. Drink the eternal, atmic bliss. Become perfectly tolerant. Forget and forgive.

27 JANUARY - ANGER

When you become angry leave the place immediately. Take a long walk; stay away for a half hour. Repeat the sacred mantra OM SANTI one hundred and eight times. You will find that your anger subsides. Another way is to count from one to thirty - your anger will subside. When anger tries to show itself, observe silence. Never utter a harsh word. Try to nip it off before it emerges from the subconscious mind.

You will have to be alert. It tries to come out so suddenly. But, before anger manifests in the mind, there is agitation in the mind. If you strive to subdue anger, then hatred subsides - but even then there may be slight impatience lingering there. Eschew this slight disturbance also. For a man who is leading a divine life, this is a serious drawback. Irritability is a weakness of the mind. Remove it by practising tolerance, mercy and love. Calmness is a direct means to the realisation of Brahman.

Keep the mind always in balance, in tune. Close the eyes. Dive deep into the divine source. Feel God's presence. Repeat His name and remember Him at all times. You will gain immense spiritual strength. Meditate early in the morning, before you mix with people. Then rise above the thousand and one things which might irritate you in your daily life. Then only you will live in harmony and concord. Then only you will turn out wonderful work.

Man wastes much energy by becoming angry, very often over little things. The whole nervous system is shattered and agitated. If this anger is controlled, by brahmacharya (purity), forbearance, love and vichara (enquiry), a man can move the whole world. Anger manifests so suddenly that it is difficult to check it. The impulses it generates are so powerful that he is swayed by them. Control anger. Control the mind.

28 JANUARY - DESTROY JEALOUSY

There are three ways to destroy jealousy. One is by thinking - "The whole world, with all its enjoyments, wealth and luxury is illusory. What do I possibly gain by being jealous of another?" When anyone thinks seriously about this, several times a day, the vritti (thought or feeling) of jealousy slowly dies. This vritti of jealousy is deep-rooted. It is the root of all miseries.

The second way is to have the feeling of universal brotherhood. You are not jealous of your intimate friend or loving brother - because you have become one with them, and so you feel that all that belongs to them is yours. Do this with everybody. Love everybody as your own brother or friend. Then you will have no jealousy.

The third way to destroy jealousy, is a developed stage. Just repeat the formula, "I am the all" - "I am the all-in-all". Think that there is nothing but atman, your own self, everywhere. Jealousy will slowly vanish. You will experience infinite joy.

Man sees his own reflection in all people but foolishly imagines that they are different from him and he fights with them. He fights on account of feelings of jealousy and hatred.

Spiritual discernment is what is most needed. Where there is duality, by virtue of ignorance, one sees all things as distinct from the self, the atman. When everything is seen as the self, then there is not even an atom other than self. Duality is the root of misery. Realise non-dual consciousness and you will attain everlasting bliss.

Your attitude to the universe should be the same as your attitude to your self. Man is a member of a great fraternity. Woman is the counterpart of man. Without self-control the new world order can have no lasting strength of character. He who is pure and self-controlled is always peaceful. His life is always successful.

29 JANUARY - THE LAW OF BEING

Dharma (righteousness) is what a man ought to be. It is the law that man must follow for his own spiritual evolution. Sanatana Dharma - is the law of being and it is the religion of humanity. It is not a special privilege of the Hindu only.

Righteousness opens the way for God-realisation. The treasure of dharma is accumulated by plain living and high thinking.

Truth, austerity knowledge, sacrifice and consecration are the pillars on which dharma rests. These are the great, eternal laws that uphold the earth.

There are ten attributes of dharma. They are: patience or courage, forgiveness, self-restraint, non-stealing, purity, control of the senses, thoughtfulness, knowledge, truthfulness and angerlessness.

Dharma assumes the shape of the moral law that differentiates between good and evil, that impels right action and not wrong action. The rightness or wrongness depends only on what will help or hinder a man's spiritual progress. Human existence has four values. They are: dharma - the ethical value of life; artha - the material value; kaama - the vital value; moksha -the infinite value.

No one can lead a life of adharma (unrighteousness) and be happy. This is because happiness is the nature of the atman and dharma too is an expression of the law of the self.

That which elevates you is virtue (dharma) and that which pulls you down is vice (adharma) or sin. That which helps you to attain Godhead is virtue. That which hurls you into the dark abyss of ignorance is sin, and that which leads you to illumination is virtue.

That which causes intoxication is sin and that which purifies the heart is virtue. That which gives you peace, joy, satisfaction, exhilaration, expansion of the heart is virtue and that which brings restlessness, dissatisfaction, depression and contraction is vice.

30 JANUARY - DHARMA

Dharma or righteousness is the gateway to God-vision. Righteousness is a means of climbing the difficult steps of the spiritual path. Dharma presupposes the knowledge of the truth. Divine life is dharma.

A perfectly moral and ethical life is dharma. Dharma is that which leads to the bliss of nirvana (the immortal being). Dharma is the way in which you have to divert your spiritual life to the supreme spiritual end.

Dharma controls the pulse of a nation and of the world. Dharma is what sustains a being in his evolution. Dharma or righteousness is religion in the highest sense of the term.

Dharma is the eternal law on which the universe rests, and by which the universe is governed. Welfare of mankind ultimately rests upon dharma. Righteousness is the highest wealth. It is the rule of life. In righteousness everything is established or rooted.

The main feature of dharma lies in refraining from doing unto others what one would not do unto oneself. Compassion, liberality, truthfulness, purity, self-restraint and tolerance are the ingredients of dharma. Tread the path of dharma and you will get happiness along with freedom. You can secure the real joy and glory of life.

That which helps you in your spiritual evolution is right. That which obstructs and hinders your spiritual evolution is wrong. That which leads to unity of self, is right. That which leads to separation is wrong. To do good to others, to serve and to help others, to give joy to others, is right. To give pain to others, to injure others, is wrong.

Do not do any act which injures another and makes you feel ashamed to do it. Do as you would be done by. Do unto others as you wish others to do unto you. This is the secret of dharma. This is the secret essence of karma yoga. This will lead you to the attainment of eternal bliss.

31 JANUARY - RIGHT AND WRONG

'Right' and 'wrong' are relative terms. They vary according to time, special circumstances, varna (caste), and asrama (stage of life). Morality is a changing and relative term. The passionate man who molests his wife frequently, to gratify his own passion is more immoral than a man who visits the house of a woman of ill fame once in six months. The man, who dwells constantly on immoral thoughts, is the most immoral man of all.

Do you clearly note the subtle difference? To kill an enemy is right for a king but, a brahmana (priest) or a sanyasin (monk) should not kill anybody, even to protect himself in times of danger. He should practise strict forbearance and forgiveness. To speak an untruth, to save the life of a mahatma (holy one), or one's guru, who has been unjustly charged by an unjust officer of state, is right. In this particular case untruth has become truth. To speak a truth which brings harm to many is untruth only. To kill a robber who murders wayfarers, is ahimsa only. Himsa (violence) becomes ahimsa (non violence) under certain circumstances.

Even great sages are bewildered sometimes in finding out what is right and what is wrong. That is why Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita: "What is action and what is inaction? Even the wise are herein perplexed. Therefore I will declare to thee the action, by knowing which thou shalt be liberated from evil. It is needful to discriminate unlawful action and to discriminate inaction. Mysterious is the path of action. He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, he is wise among men. He is harmonious even while performing all actions." (Chapter IV, Verse 16-18).

Rishi Kanada, author of Vaisesika Philosophy, says in the opening verse: "That which brings supreme bliss and exaltation is right. That which elevates and brings you nearer to God, is right. That which brings you down and takes you away from God, is wrong. That which is done in strict accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures, is right. That which is done against the injunctions of the scriptures, is wrong. To work in accordance with divine will, is right. To work in opposition to the divine will, is wrong". This is one way of defining right and wrong.

1 FEBRUARY - GOOD AND EVIL

The universe contains two dynamic forces. They are good and evil. Good and evil are twin forces, born of the same father. They are called dvandvas or the pairs of opposites. They have no independent existence. Evil exists to glorify good. This is its only raison d'etre. Evil is negative good!

Evil is a destructive force. Good is a constructive force. There is neither absolute good nor absolute evil in this universe. Evil has no independent existence apart from good. Wherever there is good, there is evil. You cannot expect absolute good in this relative world.

You can find absolute good in Brahman alone. From the viewpoint of the basic reality, which lies at the back of evil and good, evil and good dwindle into an airy nothing. Evil and good are only mental creations. Transcend good and evil, and reach the abode of supreme peace and immortality.

For a jnani, who has knowledge of the self, there is neither good nor bad. The ‘why' of evil can only be understood when you get atma-jnana (self-knowledge). Do not rack your brain now. This is a transcendental mystery which only Brahman knows. Finite intellect that is conditioned in time, space and causation cannot find out a solution to this problem of evil. When you are fully established in your self, then evil and good both vanish altogether.

Transmute evil into good by changing your mental attitude, or angle of vision. Out of evil, good often cometh. Destruction is necessary for regeneration, for renovation and for reconstruction.

Tamas (inertia) is evil. Satva (purity) is good. So convert tamas into satva. Then evil is transmuted into good. Selfishness is evil and selflessness is good. Lust is evil, brahmacharya (celibacy) is good. Greed is evil. Generosity, integrity, disinterestedness - all these are good. Pride is evil and humility is good.

2 FEBRUARY - GARDEN OF VIRTUE

Forgiveness is the greatest virtue which shines forth in all its splendour in the devotee. Courage and patience are the twin qualities of a real aspirant. Humility is the highest of all virtues. God helps you only when you feel truly humble. Humility is not cowardice. It is meekness and not weakness. Humility and meekness are indeed spiritual powers. Make patience thy strength. Assert it. Feel it. Will it.

Non-attachment comes very slowly. It gives a new sense of freedom and peace. Anger is the worst fire. Lust is an all-consuming fire. Both will scorch you. Extinguish these fires through love and purity. Meditate. Think: "I am the fearless, immortal soul". Then fear will vanish.

True love is the greatest power on earth. It rules without a sword and binds without a cord. To love God is to love all. To love all is to love God. Spread the message of love. Practise cosmic love. Love all. Embrace all. Be kind to all. This will remove jealousy, hatred, etc. To love all is the secret of self-realisation and liberation.

The four fundamental virtues are patience, adaptability, kind speech and pure conduct. Justice, temperance, courage and wisdom are also great virtues. Virtue is the golden key which opens the gate to the abode of eternal bliss.

Cultivate divine virtues such as purity, courage, humility, self-restraint, non-violence truth, mercy, faith, etc. Be virtuous. You are on the way to wisdom. In the garden of your heart, plant the lily of love, the rose of purity, the champaka of courage, the mandara of humility and the lady-of-the-night of compassion.

Virtue is knowledge. Virtue is excellence. Knowledge is the ripe fruit of the fine flower of virtue. Think well. All saints teach that you must do good in thought and word and deed. This is the principle of morality.

3 FEBRUARY - AN EXERCISE FOR DEVELOPING VIRTUE

Examine your character. Pick up the defects you find in it, and find their opposites. Let us say that you suffer from irritability. The opposite of irritability is patience. Try to develop this virtue by meditating on the abstract virtue of patience.

Regularly, every morning, at 4 a.m. sit down in the lotus posture. Sit in a solitary place for half an hour - think of patience. Think of its values, think of its practice under provocation.

Thus, take one point each day. Think about that point steadily, without letting the mind wander. Think of yourself as perfectly patient, a model of patience. End the meditation with a vow that "This patience, which is my true self, I will feel and show, today and every day".

For a few days there may be no perceptible change. You may still show and feel irritability. But go on practising. You will see that soon, thoughts of patience will arise simultaneously with the irritable impulse and the irritation will be checked.

Go on practising. The irritable impulses will grow more and more feeble, until you find that irritability has disappeared and patience has become your normal attitude towards annoyance.

In this manner you may develop various other virtues, such as sympathy, self-restraint, purity, humility, benevolence, nobility and generosity.

Concentration of the mind on God, after its purification, gives real happiness and knowledge. You are born for this purpose only. Dive deep. The divine flame, the light of lights is burning there. Merge within.

"You have passed through millions of wombs,
You had countless births,
You had countless fathers and mothers,
You had numberless brothers and sisters,
Millions of wives and children,
And yet your desires have not perished.
You live to eat, drink and make merry.
But birth is painful, death is painful, all is painful.
Listen to me brother - kill passion.
Enthrone Lord Rama in your heart
Then sound the trumpet of triumph –
So says Sivananda."

4 FEBRUARY - MAN OF VIRTUE

He who is virtuous, who is kind on all occasions, and who is filled with compassion, obtains great contentment. He ascends the superior path of virtue. Harmlessness, forgiveness, peacefulness, contentment, agreeable speech, control of passions and excitements, the service of virtuous people, and actions in accordance with the injunctions of the sacred scriptures, constitute the superior path of virtue. He, who daily worships the virtuous, can reach the eternal abode of wisdom.

He who has no liking for what is agreeable and no dislike for what is disagreeable, who practises self-restraint, who regards pleasure and pain as same, who injures no creatures and destroys no life, he is considered good and virtuous.

He who is devoted to the well-being of all, who sacrifices his very life for others, who has truth for his refuge, who gives but does not take, who has mercy, who adores his elders, gods and guests; to whom good conduct is always dear, and who has no fear of the next world - he is regarded as good and perfect.

Such a promoter of virtue cannot be seduced from the path of virtue. He is fearless, tranquil, serene, full of mercy. He is adored by all the good people wherever they are. Such a man is not attached to worldly objects. Fear, lust, anger, restlessness and sorrow do not live in him.

Such a promoter of virtue never deviates from righteousness. He is not attached to anything. He is free from pride. He regards all impartially. He holds Gain and loss, happiness and misery, the agreeable and the disagreeable, life and death, all in equal estimation. O man, always respect such a good and virtuous person. Serve him. Seek instruction from him.

Can you serve like Florence Nightingale? Can you obey like a soldier on the battlefield? Can you be generous like Ranti Deva? Can you spend sleepless nights in devotion to the Lord, like Mira? Can you do tapas (penance) like Dhruva? Can you stick to your convictions like Mansoor and Shams Tabriez? Can you be fearless like the sage who met Alexander the Great, on the banks of the river Indus?

If you can say, 'Yes', to all these questions, you will have self-realisation this very second. You will have contact with avataras (divine incarnations) and full-blown yogis, this very second. First deserve and then desire.

5 FEBRUARY - TRUE LOVE OF GOD

My child, you have been extremely fortunate in getting this human birth. Have intense devotion to God and commune with Him. Kindle the light divine within your heart and maintain its flame of devotion through your constant remembrance of the Lord. It is true devotion that counts; it does not matter which deity you worship.

The marks of devotion are love, faith, confidence, humility, service. God accepts all forms of prayer and worship through, which man expresses his love and devotion for Him. Bhakti or devotion is the natural affinity between the devotee and the Lord.

As iron that is touched by the touch-stone turns to gold at once, as the water of the roadway mixed with that of the Ganges becomes pure at once, even so the heart of the devotee, though greatly soiled by many great sins becomes pure if attached with devotion to the Lord.

To remove the afflictions and sorrows of the devotees, gives the greatest happiness to the Lord. No evil can touch the devotee whose devotion is sincere, and whose faith is genuine. Put your little seed of faith in your heart, water it with love and devotion. Then the great tree of bhava samadhi (the culmination of devotion) will grow.

The company of devotees is a priceless asset. It invigorates the mind. It is only through God's grace that man feels the desire to be in the company of saints. A devotee does every action for the sake of the Lord. He hates none, he loves God only. He who is internally and externally pure, compassionate, truthful, forgiving, free from likes and dislikes, and is given to investigating the truth about God, is a real devotee.

6 FEBRUARY - LOVE ALL

Love is happiness. Love is life. Love is energy. Love is immortality. Love is wisdom. Love never fails. Love is success. Love is victory. Love is eternal sunshine. Love alone creates and unites.

Love is the moving principle of all forms of fellowship. When you realise your oneness with a man, you can really love him whole-heartedly. The world can only be united for common welfare through unselfish, pure, divine love.

Love dissolves hatred and animosity. Love promotes understanding. To love all as one loves oneself, is the succinct statement of dharma. Universal love is the mark of saintliness. Without love there is no life.

God resides in all creatures. God is immanent in all forms. Therefore love all. Be compassionate to all creatures. This gives the greatest joy to God. Love all in the one love divine. Modern civilisation is complicated and artificial. Simple folk live in a world of love and peace. Let no one hate another or harm another.

Look not at the defects of your neighbours. Look at your own shortcomings and imperfections. Love one another. When these principles govern an individual's life, then man is happy, peaceful and joyful.

Love is the basis of all real and permanent happiness, of all real and permanent peace. Love is the supreme gift; it is the greatest thing in the world. Love never fails. Perfect love casts out fear. Love lends impetus and incentive to life. It makes one daring, courageous and strong.

Love makes one generous, unselfish, patient, merciful and forgiving. Love discloses the sublimest meaning and purpose of life. Love makes one have good-will towards his neighbour, loyalty towards his friends, and it gives compassion for the enemy.

To love is to suffer. Love and suffering always go together.

7 FEBRUARY - HOW TO ERADICATE HATRED

No samadhi (union with God) is possible when hatred, prejudice, jealousy, anger, lust, etc., exist in the mind. Remove these defects by love, endurance, contemplation of the infinite, vision of the self, good company, and enquiry. Love is the greatest power on earth. Compassion is the greatest sadhana (spiritual practice).

Karuna (compassion) is to relieve pain where it is and not to give pain to others. He who gives charity to a poor man, gives it to himself. For there is nothing else save his own self in the universe. He who hurts, hates, abuses, another man - he hurts, hates and abuses himself only.

When thoughts of hatred and revenge arise in the mind, try to control the physical body and speech first. Do not utter evil and harsh words. Do not censure. Do not injure others. If you can do this for several months, the thoughts of revenge, having no scope for manifesting outside, will die of themselves.

Constant vichara (enquiry) and development of the opposite virtues of prema, daya, karuna (that is - love, compassion and sympathy or commiseration will eradicate these two violent passions. Serve the man you hate. Share with him what you have. Give him something to eat. Prostrate to him sincerely. Your hatred will subside. Your hatred will leave you. And he will begin to love you. Gifts and kind words tame the untamed man.

Serve all. Serve the Lord in all. Respect all. Have equal vision. All kinds of hatred will disappear. The sadhana (practice) of equal-vision is extremely difficult but strenuous efforts will bring about success eventually. Aspirants who wish to abolish the dividing line, should develop love for a very dear person first. After that he should develop love for an indifferent person. Then after that, he should develop love for an enemy.

In doing this, in each compartment, they should make the heart tender and loving. And this should immediately afterwards induce meditation.

8 FEBRUARY - A SAINT

God dwells in those who have no lust, anger, pride, arrogance, delusion, greed, hatred and deceit. A sage realises his unity, his spiritual oneness with others. He sees their suffering and out of compassion, devotion and love, he stays on the earth plane - to serve and to suffer for all creatures - until they become purified and attain illumination.

He is a saint who has conquered the senses, who is endowed with righteous conduct, who speaks sweet words even to those who are crooked by nature, and whose heart is always softened by tender feelings for others. He is a saint who has shaken off all attachments, who is never swayed by lust, greed or anger, who is constantly established in righteousness, who is wise, humble, modest and forgiving.

A saint is compassionate - he is free from violence, greed, hypocrisy and duplicity. He regards earthly riches as poison. A saint is forbearing. He has a generous heart and possesses great fortitude and discrimination. A saint is free from egoism and selfishness - he is liberated.

A saint is the one to be worshipped. He is a paramahamsa. He has shaken off everything. Each saint proclaims the same truth, but his teachings are adapted to suit the requirements of his time and area of influence.

He who looks upon everything with an equal eye, who is perfectly calm and serene, who does not covet anything, and who is the friend of all he is a real saint.

Sri Vasishta tells Rama: "An acharya's (preceptor's) grace, if it becomes en rapport with his disciple, will of itself, in a mysterious manner, enable the disciple to perceive directly the Brahmic principle within, though it is impossible for the guru to point to Brahman as 'this' or 'that', or for the disciple to understand how it is, prior to his direct perception. Each should recognize it within himself, through his own jnana (intuition) and with the aid of the acharya (preceptor) and an understanding of the true significance of the many scriptures. It is indeed very rare to attain that state without the help of a guru and spiritual book. Should all three combine - that is, an acharya, jnana-sastra (scripture dealing with self-knowledge) and a true disciple, then it is certain that the seat beyond all bondage will be attained.

9 FEBRUARY – WAY TO RADIANT HEALTH

This mysterious human body, the temple of God, the nine-gated city of Brahman, is a marvellous palace for the immortal indweller, or soul. The body is a product of the prarabdha karma (the karma that determines this present life for this individual soul). It belongs to the jiva (individual soul) and the virat (the physical world) also. The sum total of all physical bodies is virat purusha (the deity presiding over the universe).

The body is the most marvellous and delicate machine in the world. It is a highly complex mechanism. Even the most eminent doctors in the world have not yet completely understood its structure and working. One virulent microbe can destroy it in an instant. The body is surrounded on all sides by enemies - and yet man lives. This is a very great mystery. This is due to the grace of the Lord. The force of prarabdha protects and nourishes it.

A spermatozoan, which is a millionth part of a drop, and an ovum, joined together, give rise to the formation of this body. What a great mystery. That subtle essence, which is the source for this, that which sustains these, is thy own self. That is truth. That is soul. Thou art that.

Realise this and free yourself from the cage of bone and flesh. The growth of the body, with all its limbs, organs, etc., from this tiny speck of sperm, proclaims the omnipotence of the Lord.

God is that wonderful architect who has built this wonderful body-palace. The architect of this marvellous body has shown the greatest skill. He is the architect of all architects. The arches of buildings are nothing when compared to the arches of the body, which are a few fragile bones, joined together to form the arch of the foot, which supports the weight of the body. One tiny nerve moves the muscles of the face. The face then expresses the emotions of the mind - what a grand marvel! Look at that delicate organ of the eye. One small aperture which allows a mountain to enter! This greatest architect is the Lord who dwells in the chamber of your heart. Glory to him. Prostrations to this great architect.

10 FEBRUARY - WAY TO RADIANT HEALTH

Health is joy. Health is wealth. Health is the elixir of life. Without health life becomes a burden. Nature tries to keep us healthy, but we bring on sickness by continuous violation of the laws of nature. Natural laws are relentless. There is no mercy.

In the animal kingdom there is seldom any sickness because animals do not violate the laws of nature. Before the age of machinery, man's life was more natural. Persons of the past generations were much stronger and healthier.

Life in the twentieth century is becoming more and more artificial. Hence there is much deterioration in health and strength. In spite of the innumerable doctors and the latest medical discoveries our health is still deteriorating.

"A sound mind in a healthy body", as the saying goes. The mind controls the body, so try to keep your mind as cheerful as possible, under all circumstances. A strong mind wards off ill-health and it also helps us to preserve good health.

Run in the open air. Wear simple, light clothing. Take only simple, light, nourishing food. Do not go to doctors. Endeavour to qualify yourself as your own doctor. Take lots of exercise. Take sun baths and cold baths. Inhale ozone.

Observe moderation in food, drink and copulation. Lead a pious life. Develop right thinking, right feeling, right speaking, right action, right belief, right knowledge, right conduct. Do not employ servants. Rely on yourself in all things.

If you want radiant health, return to nature. Then you will have a blooming face and a charming personality. Avail yourself of all the healing agencies in nature. Avail yourself of the healing properties of the sun, the water, the air, the earth, fasting, herbal plants and so on.

Observe the laws of nature in all things. Eat, drink, sleep, think, conduct yourself in the way laid down by the ancient sages.

11 FEBRUARY - SECRET OF LIVING

Disease is not a condition that ought to frighten you. It is not brought about by agencies outside yourself. Disease is the result of the kickings of life. Health alone exists. It is life alone that makes a man live. Disease is only a sign of health. It is the reaction of life to the entry of foreign matter into the system.

Life's cleansing process is called disease. There is only one disease and that is dis-ease, or no-ease. This means it is the struggle of life to get rid of foreign matter. This disease ought not to be suppressed with toxic drugs. Leave nature to get rid of it in her own way.

The first and foremost aid is fasting. Digestion of food is one of the greatest charges on the vital economy. If you put food into the stomach during disease, the vital power - which is in the process of cleansing the system of foreign matter - is diverted from its function and is made to digest the food! The only result is a worsening of the condition.

Food does not maintain life. Life eats the food and produces the energy necessary for its digestion and elimination. That is all. Life lives by itself. Food is necessary only for life to build and repair the body.

Satvic (pure) food such as fruits, vegetables, whole cereals, nuts, green leafy vegetables and milk, nourishes the body and helps life. It does not need to be eaten with appetisers, which act as aeroplanes to carry the food to the stomach, since such food is not demanded by the life-fire within.

This life-fire is God Himself. Man should wait for the appearance of this God within and only then offer Him some food. But nowadays people mistake the cravings of the palate for hunger. Perhaps hunger is a joy they have never experienced.

Real hunger, as it is in the form of the Lord Himself, is indescribable in its nature, even as God Himself is. To know this, one has to experience it. One cannot be told by another.

12 FEBRUARY - SEE GOOD IN ALL HEALING AGENTS

Brahman or the eternal is infinite. His expressions are also infinite. Allopathy, homeopathy, hydropathy, chromopathy, electropathy, naturopathy, ayurveda, unani - all are his manifestations. All these systems differ. Temperaments also are different, so are natures. Therefore different systems of treatment suit people of different natures.

It is only the prejudiced man who says, "Oh, allopathy is useless - homeopathy is the best system". Or, "Nature cure is good and ayurveda is bad". For some people ayurvedic medicines are good, for some unani medicines are good, and so on.

Sun's rays, water, herbs, green leaves, steam, mud - all are medicines. They are all products of nature. Only the names are different. The very fact that different systems exist shows that there is something good in each.

Even atoms, molecules and corpuscles have their loves and hates, likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions, affinities and non-affinities. Everybody has his own whims and fancies, his own eccentricities.

A naturopath hates and condemns an allopath. An allopath dislikes naturopathy. But a large-hearted doctor, a man with equal-vision and tolerance, who has practical knowledge of vedanta, can find good in every system. He can appreciate the beauty of variety of divine expression. He can behold unity in diversity and thus use every system to the best advantage.

Every system has its own advantage and bright side. Every system has come from the one divine source. Do not fight with one another. Do not try to prove the superiority of your system.

Take the good in everything. Be tolerant. Become wise and happy. Lead a healthy life. Attain God-realisation through the instrument of the body - the healthy, strong body.

If you have a powerful will and a strong power of endurance, then you will not feel pain. By constant thinking of disease, pain and trouble, you augment the suffering. Pain is in the mind. Atman is full of bliss.

13 FEBRUARY - WHO IS GOD?

God is the source of all light. God is the source of everything. He upholds the earth and the heavens. God is spirit. God is love. God is the source of all. God is the destroyer of ignorance. God is beyond all understanding.

God is the remover of all calamities. God is the granter of all prosperity. To the unenlightened man who depends on his senses for all final judgements, God remains unknown and therefore non-existent.

God is the one source of every action and every movement. God is the sustainer of all, the giver of all good and the bestower of all blessings. God is the eternal amongst fleeting things. He is the one in the midst of many. He is absolute consciousness.

God is the fulfiller of the desires of every man. The Lord is all-effulgence, divine, the fulfiller of desires and the granter of insight and intuition.

Who is God? God is God. He who is universal consciousness, who is eternal, who himself witnesses all that passes in every heart, who exists immutably throughout the universe and who is ever free, independent and immortal, is God.

Where is God? In his own glory. Seek him there. God has form and he is formless too. The Lord reveals himself even in a single leaf, in a blade of grass, in a drop of water.

God reveals himself only to the pure, the humble and the simple. He is the first and the last, the manifest, and the hidden. God cannot be defined. He has to be felt, seen, realised and lived in.

Religion is the link between God and man. Every religion establishes a relation between man and God. Religion should give shelter even to the worst type of sinner. It must be perfectly tolerant, broad-minded and catholic.

The essence of religion is love. There is only one religion and that is the religion of love divine, which transcends all creeds and all scriptures. Behold the one essence in all. Love all.

14 FEBRUARY - WHAT IS RELIGION?

Religion is the very foundation of civilisation in all its aspects. It is an applied science that takes man to his highest goal. Religion comprises of non-injury, self-control and austerity.

Religion tries to bring you to God and to make you divine. Its purpose is to release the ultimate values of life - the transcendental - truth, beauty, goodness and love.

Religion is a dynamic force. It is both the science and the art of life. Religion is not merely life-transcending, it is life-transforming. It is a process of purification and transformation.

Know thyself and be free. Religion teaches tolerance and peace. Religion is essentially an eternal going out in search of completeness, fullness, and wholesomeness.

Believe in the existence of God and life hereafter. Believe in right conduct, unconditional surrender to God, meditation and union with God. These are all the essentials of religion. The union of the individual soul with the divine soul, the lover with the beloved - this is true religion.

Religion lays down the laws of life. Religion teaches us how to live a divine life. Man cannot progress spiritually without religion, just as a tree cannot grow without manure and water. Religion is the support that helps us to climb the steep and narrow ladder of emancipation. It is the most important factor that helps the earnest student to understand the principles of oneness - the oneness of life and universal love.

We can attain eternal bliss, immortality and everlasting peace by attaining God-realisation. All religions admit this, unanimously. This is essential to all religions.

To realise God, one should develop universal love. One should have ethical perfection, self-restraint, the spirit of self-sacrifice, good conduct, devotion to saints and to God. One should study the holy scriptures and have perfect faith in the existence of God, in the scriptures and in the words of the guru. All religions admit this unanimously. This is essential to all religions.

15 FEBRUARY - ESSENTIALS ARE SAME

The essentials or fundamentals of all religions are the same. Only non-essentials differ. 'The Noble Eightfold Path' corresponds to 'The Sermon on-the Mount' of Lord Jesus, and to the practice of sadachara (right conduct) of the Hindus. Every religion shows the correct path to God-realisation.

Every religion emphatically declares: "One can attain eternal bliss, immortality (God-realisation). To do this one must speak the truth, observe purity or self-restraint, love others, and practise concentration and meditation."

An intolerant man cannot attain God-realisation. As his intellect becomes clouded on account of intolerance, he cannot grasp the truth. All prophets are the messengers of God. They are great yogis who have divine intuitive perception of God. Their words are infallible and sacred.

Had it not been for these prophets and their writings, there would be no hope for the salvation and betterment of man. Each prophet helped mankind by the dissemination of knowledge and the founding of the religion, which would be most suited to the people amongst whom they flourished. Glory to these prophets and their writings. May their blessings be upon you all!

Beloved Friends! Behold the unity or oneness of all religions. He who knows the truth, who has grasped the essence of all religions, will never again enter into heated debates.

Realise your identity and intimate relationship with all beings - with ants and dogs, with elephants and tigers, with Muslims and Jews, with Hindus and Christians. There is only a degree of difference in manifestation or expression. All forms belong to God or Saguna Brahman.

May you all live happily, with one heart! May you all understand the essential unity of all religions! May the blessings of all the founders of all the religions be upon you! May you all attain God-realisation in this very life!

OM PEACE! OM PEACE! OM PEACE!

16 FEBRUARY - BIRTH AND DEATH

Birth and death, bondage and freedom, pleasure and pain, gain and loss - all are mental creations. Transcend the pairs of opposites. You were never born, you will never die. Thou art the immortal self always, O Prem. Thou art ever free from the three periods of time. It is the physical body that goes and comes. The self is all-full, all-pervading, infinite and partless.

Recognise, O Prem, that you are the living truth. Realise that you are always inseparable from the one essence that is the substratum of all these illusory names and forms. Get yourself firmly established in Brahman. Nothing can disturb you now. You have become invulnerable. Feel this through intuition when you enter into deep samadhi (the supreme silence), my child.

The god of death will tremble before you now. By your command the sun shines, the fire burns and the wind blows. Thou art beyond time, space and causation. Just as the clouds hide the sun, so also the darkness of ignorance, the clouds of the vasanas (mental conditioning) and egoism, are hiding the jnana surya (sun of wisdom) that is ever shining in the chambers of your heart.

Through meditation and attainment of self-knowledge (atma-jnana) you will dispel the dark clouds of ignorance. Now you will shine in Brahmic splendour and glory. Proclaim this truth everywhere.

You must not be afraid of maya (illusion) now. She is under your perfect control. Stand firm like yonder rock. Be adamantine. Now move about in the world like a lion. Now go and lift up the young struggling souls out of the mire of samsara (worldly life).

Disseminate knowledge of the self. Love all. Be kind to all. Expand thy heart. Have space in thy heart for all, even for the man who is trying to poison you.

Do not come under the influence of sudden impulses. Do not be carried away by the force of emotions, no matter how noble they may be. Be ever vigilant. Be ever diligent. Be not troubled. Be not anxious. Be not idle. Wait coolly. You are bound to succeed. Develop courage by feeling you are the atman. Deny the "I am the body" idea. Practise meditation.

All difficulties will come to an end. You will enjoy unalloyed bliss.

17 FEBRUARY - LIFE AND DEATH

Death is only a process by which life is continued. Death is not annihilation of the self. Hence do not be afraid of death. Death is for the better; it is a blessing. Therefore grieve not. Life is impossible without death. Death is just another aspect of life. Until the proper time comes, one's death does not take place, however serious the disease or accident may seem. When the right time comes, then one can die by the edge of a straw!

Life is a lightning flash of breath. Time is but a thunderclap of death. The doctrine of reincarnation is indeed a great solace to humanity in so far as it shows a way out from eternal damnation in hell.

When the lust for life ceases, no further rebirth will take place. One power works through all hands, sees through all eyes and hears through all ears. All humanity is one in substance. The same flesh and the same blood form the body of an American, an Englishman, an African and an Indian. The instincts and longings are common to all creatures. This indicates the oneness of all forms of life.

Experiments have revealed life in stone, in wood and in minerals. They have established the unity of consciousness or the unity of all life. Prana (energy) is the driving power of the world. Force is energy. Spiritual force is the saving power. It is the greatest of all forces. It can control all physical and mental forces.

Physical science is objective and hence cannot lead to absolute truth. There is a soul behind mind and nature and will. Soul is the divine essence. The conception of the unity of God is the pivot around which all other doctrines revolve. No religion, no nation, no scheme or reform, nor plan for the future of the world, will endure, if it is not based on genuine faith in God. We all belong to one and the same family, to one and the same house, that of the Supreme Lord - the creator, the nourisher and the sustainer.

When you look at a tree or a shrub, a Sikh or a Muslim, endeavour to behold, behind the veil of form, the real hidden consciousness. If you do this for some time, you will feel inexpressible joy. All hatred will cease. You will develop cosmic love, or unity of consciousness. This will be a magnanimous experience.

18 FEBRUARY - GUIDE TO SADHAKAS

Be prepared to suffer any amount of-pain. Have a set of maxims with you always to induce vairagya (dispassion). Treat sensual enjoyment as poison, as vomited food, as dung or urine. They cannot give you satisfaction. Preserve your virya (vital energy) carefully. Sleep always separately. Revere ladies as the Mother divine. Root out the sex idea. Prostrate before all. See God in every face, in every thing.

Take to sankirtan (chanting), satsang (holy company), prayer when the mind is overpowered by lower instincts. Face obstacles coolly and boldly. Care not about criticism when you are in the right path. Yield not to flattery. Respect even rogues and scoundrels - serve them. Admit your faults plainly. Take care of your health - do not neglect daily asana and other yoga exercises. Be active and nimble always.

Develop your heart by giving. Be extra-ordinarily charitable - give more than one's expectations. Desires multiply miseries. Develop contentment. Control the senses one by one. Develop brahmakara vritti ("I am Brahman" idea) by repeated thinking. Have a check over all your thoughts keep them pure and sublime. Do not lose your temper when anyone insults you or taunts or rebukes you. It is a mere variety of sounds - a mere play of words. Rest your mind in God. Live in the truth. Be up and doing in the path of perfection.

Have a definite aim in your life and proceed towards it cautiously. The benefits of mauna (silence) are incalculable. Never give up this practice. There are four important means for passion to enter the mind - sound, touch, sight and thought. Be vigilant! Have intimate connection with none but God. Mix little with others. Be moderate in all things - extremes are always dangerous.

Every day have self-analysis and introspection. Know the extent of your growth. Give up curiosities in the spiritual path. Conserve your energy and concentrate. Think little of the food, body, relatives. Think more of the atman. You must realise God in this very birth itself.

19 FEBRUARY - RENOUNCE

Go wherever you like. Go to Kashmir, to Darjeeling, to Vienna or the Alps, you will not find any real rest.

The charming scenery may soothe the retina for a few seconds but raga (attraction), dvesha (aversion), jealousy, passion and greed are everywhere. You will find the same earth, the same sky, the same air, the same water everywhere. You carry the same mind with you everywhere. Imagination and change of place have deceived many people. Be contented. Live wherever you like - but discipline the mind and the-senses, ceaselessly. Meditate on the inner self (antar-atman) ceaselessly. Here you will find everlasting peace. The mind will stop deceiving you now.

If you do not have sustained vairagya (dispassion), you will find no improvement or progress in spirituality. Vows, austerities, energy and meditation will leak out like water from a cracked pot.

You have spent eight hours in sleep and the rest in idle gossiping, telling lies, deceiving others, in selfish activities and in gaining money. How do you expect any spiritual good?

How do you expect immortality if you do not spend even half an hour in the service of God, in singing His name and in divine contemplation? Is there pain or is there pleasure in this world? If there is pleasure, why do young educated men retire to the forests? If there is pain, why do young men run after wealth, position and women?

Ah! Mysterious is maya (illusion). Mysterious is moha (delusion)! Try to understand the riddle of life and the riddle of the universe. Acquire viveka (wisdom). Have satsang (holy company). Enquire into the nature of the atman.

Study the Yoga Vasishta and the Upanishads. Then you will have a comprehensive understanding of the problems of life. There is not one iota of happiness in this world.

Renounce this world. Renounce the desire for moksha (liberation). Renounce renunciation itself. Then you will become that.

20 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

What is divine life? To shed the animal in man and to sublimate the human in him to the divine; to express the sublimation in his daily life, in his hourly life, in thought, word and deed. That is divine life.

To pray, to do japa (repetition of God's name), to sing His glory, to do kirtan (chanting), to meditate on the Lord, is divine life.

Treat all kinds of work, domestic, official, etc., as service of God. Surrender all your actions and their fruits to the Lord. Give up agency. Feel you are an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Actions will not bind you. Your heart will be purified. The grace and light of God will descend on you.

This is the way to spiritualise all your actions. See God in all beings and things. See the world as a manifestation of God. It is not necessary to abandon the world in order to have a vision of God, because the world itself is a manifestation of God.

Listen! Wake up now. Develop dispassion. Do sadhana (spiritual practice). Beware of the senses. Become desireless.

Understand life. Live divinely. Seek good company. Fear not. Waste not time. Depend on God. Spiritual discipline is the key to God-realisation. Discipline the body and the senses and the mind. May you attain God-realisation now and here.

Be regular in keeping your spiritual diary. Spiritual progress will be greatly quickened. Kindly be regular in sending me a copy of your diary at the end of each month for review and further instructions. I am immensely pleased to note your regularity in sadhana.

Go to bed early (10 p.m.) and get up early (4 a.m.). The early morning hours are most favourable for meditation.

Understand life's supreme purpose. Seek the eternal. Realise the underlying essence. Have intense thirst for liberation. Die to live. Discipline the mind. Have self-control.

Learn to be wise. Make the best use of this human birth. Realise the oneness of existence.

21 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Serve untiringly. Serve selflessly. Pray devotedly. Live truthfully. You will soon enter the kingdom of God.

Remain cheerful. Do japa whole-heartedly. Rejoice heartily. You will attain the state of blessedness.

Reflect ceaselessly. Meditate intensely. Realise perfectly. Rest peacefully.

Think rightly. Act righteously. Meditate regularly. You will attain eternal bliss. Aspire fervently. Pray sincerely. Introspect seriously. Reflect vigorously. You will enjoy supreme peace.

Speak sweetly. Speak softly. Speak lovingly. Speak truthfully. You will attain unalloyed felicity.

Never leave your sadhana (spiritual practice), your meditation, even for a day. Constant practice and eternal vigilance are indispensable, till God-realisation is attained.

As long as you do not realise the truth, practise self-control and meditation. Conscious attempts to unite oneself with God, is called spiritual sadhana.

Subjugate the senses. Slay this egoism. Curb the mind and enter the illimitable domain of immortal bliss.

Om Krishna.

Faith creates, faith heals, faith works wonders, faith moves mountains.

Faith is the secret light for finding God. Faith makes the weak strong and the timid brave. Faith makes the impossible possible. Therefore, have unflinching, perfect faith in the Lord.

Please remember always that renunciation is the essence of spirituality and the secret of self-realisation. Renunciation is getting rid of egoism, desires and cravings.

Renunciation is the only way to perfection and bliss eternal. Renunciation leads to complete unification with the supreme being.

Renounce and be free.

22 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Dharma is the pivot of life. Dharma means duty, righteousness, religion, eternal law. Where dharma is, there victory is.

Dharma supports life. Dharma brings perfection. Dharma is a way of life based on virtues and perfect moral conduct. Dharma bestows immortal bliss.

Control of the mind is the first step to spirituality. Victory over the mind means victory over the world. Conquest of the mind is the greatest victory.

The mind becomes unstable and restless through desires for objects. When the mind is not centred in the atman, man desires objects. Become desireless, control the mind, be happy for ever.

Satsanga is association with saints and sages. Without satsanga the mind cannot be turned towards God.

Satsanga is a formidable and impregnable - fortress to protect aspirants from the temptations of maya (illusion). Live in the company of sages, hear their valuable instructions and follow them implicitly.

God is love. Bhakti is the experience of divine love. Do your duty in a spirit of worship. Perform all actions in an attitude of prayer.

Your heart should overflow with divine love at the sight of any object in this world. Then alone you will become an ideal devotee.

Bhakti is devotion unto the Lord. Prayer, japa (repetition of God's name), kirtan (chanting), remembrance, worship, meditation, self-surrender are all limbs of bhakti yoga. Bhakti yoga is suitable for the vast majority of persons. Para (supreme) bhakti and jnana (self-knowledge) are one.

23 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

God is very close to you. He abides in your heart. Closer is He than the breath; nearer than hands and feet! He is your very self or atman. Strive to know God. Seek the company of sages. Lead a life of selfless service, renunciation, dispassion, prayer and meditation.

Have self-conquest. Control the mind. You will attain perfection and peace. The divine grace is life's greatest treasure. If there is self-surrender, there is the inflow of grace. Lord's grace will descend in proportion to the degree of surrender The more the surrender, the more the grace.

Supreme love comes only by the grace of God. Grace of God will make you stick to the spiritual path.

Japa is the-recitation of Lord's name. Japa is an Important sadhana (practice) for God-realisation. Japa yoga is the easiest, safest and surest way of attaining the goal in the present age.

Repeat 200 malas (rosary of 108 beads) of japa daily. Do more mental japa. Practice of japa brings the devotee face to face with God.

Japa yoga is the yoga of recitation of a mantra (or name of the Lord). There is a mysterious power in every name of the Lord. A name or mantra is recited in three ways, viz. verbal or loud utterance, semi-verbal or humming, and mental. Mental japa is more powerful.

Let the recitation of japa become habitual. Do purashcharana - do one lakh (one hundred thousand) of japa for each letter (of the mantra). Live on milk and fruits. Observe brahmacharya during this period.

Prayer is not asking. It is the yearning of the soul for communion with God. Sincere prayer draws the grace of the Lord. Prayer is a mighty spiritual force. It should spring from the bottom of your heart.

Pray sincerely, fervently, whole-heartedly. Then alone will God listen to your prayer.

24 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

True and sincere surrender unto the Lord is the essence of bhakti (God-love).

"I am Thine. All is Thine
Thy will be done, my Lord."
This is the best Sharanagati Mantra or prayer (of self-surrender).
Seek His will. Do His will. Surrender to His will. You will become one with the cosmic will.

Hatha yoga is mainly concerned with the physical body and the pranamaya sheath. It prepares the aspirant for raja yoga.

Hatha yoga deals with the practice of asanas, pranayama, bandhas and mudras. It treats of sad kriyas too. It gives splendid health removes various sorts of diseases and awakens the kundalini.

The practice of yoga asanas bestows mental poise. If you practise asanas for even ten minutes daily, you will derive immense benefits. Be regular in the practice of asana - This is important.

Sirshasana bestows brain-power and develops the intellect and the memory. It is useful in maintaining brahmacharya (celibacy). It cures many diseases. Sarvangasana gives longevity and makes the spine elastic.

Be steady in your asana. Gradually try to sit on one asana for three hours at a stretch. Regulate and restrain the breath, through the practice of pranayama (yoga breathing). Withdraw the senses from the object. Now you will be able to practise concentration and meditation.

Regularity in the practice of concentration is of paramount importance.

For success in brahmacharya (celibacy) intensify your japa (repetition of God's name) and meditation. Keep up constant mental repetition of the Lord's name, even during your work.

Have three sittings for meditation - morning, evening and night, just before going to bed.

25 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Vairagya is dispassion, desirelessness or nonattachment.

Vairagya liberates man from bondage. Vairagya is the foremost virtue.

Look into the defects of sensual life. Live in the company of saints. You will develop vairagya.

Vairagya is born of discrimination. It will help you and will be permanent. Without vairagya, not even an iota of spiritual progress is possible.

Mind is the atma-shakti (power of self). It is the dividing wall between the individual soul and the supreme soul.

Mind creates this universe. It is the principle of thinking and sensation. It is a bundle of vasanas (habit patterns), thoughts, likes and dislikes. Slay the mind through destruction of the vasanas in Brahma-vichara and attain self-realisation.

Egoism is your arch enemy. It is born of ignorance. The real secret of divine life is only in the renunciation of this dire egoism.

The tree of egoism can be destroyed by the fire of wisdom only.

These are the ways to control the senses. Cultivate dispassion or non-attachment to objects; practise pratyahara (or withdrawal) and self-restraint.

Give up love or hate for objects. You can control the senses and the mind.

It is better to practise concentration on one form of God and to repeat one mantra (mystic formula). Concentration will thereby be greatly increased.

If the mind wanders bring it back again and again to the form. Practise a little pranayama (yoga breathing). It will steady the mind. Observe mauna (or silence) for two hours. It will conserve energy and produce more concentration.

26 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Behold! You must be diligent and vigilant always. Do not give leniency to the mind. Be regular in your meditation. Meditation is the very essence and life of all spiritual sadhanas.

Meditate on the form of Lord Krishna with flute in His hand. Concentrate on Trikuti (the space between the eyebrows). Repeat mentally - Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

May Lord Krishna be your centre, ideal and goal.

Meditation is a sound and safe method by which you can unlock your inner power and attain God-realisation. When you are in meditation you will touch the level of cosmic consciousness in a flash of illumination.

You will know that life is eternal and that you are eternal. God is the only reality. God is the only truth. God alone exists. Know this, realise this. God is love. He dwells in your heart. Recite His name always. Sing His glories, Do kirtan (chanting). Conquer the whole world by truth and love.

In silence alone you can hold communion with God. When there is conflict of duty, sit and meditate. Hear the inner voice and act immediately. During meditation one enters into a half-sleepy state this is called tandra. If one is really meditating, his body will be light and his mind will be cheerful. If he is sleeping, the body will be heavy, the mind will be dull and the eye-lids will be heavy.

During deep meditation, you will forget the external world first and then the body. You will feel that there is no body. You will experience immense joy, indescribable peace.

Natural retention of the breath, without inhalation and exhalation, will come by itself. Meditate on a concrete form in the beginning. Meditate on any form of the Lord. Think of his attributes - omnipotence, purity, perfection, etc. Gradually the mind will be prepared to take up the higher, formless meditation.

Be patient. Be persevering. Cultivate burning dispassion, burning longing for God-realisation. Gradually you will enter into deep meditation and samadhi.

27 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Meditation is freeing the mind from thoughts of sense objects. Mind dwells on God and God alone during meditation Have perfect ethical perfection. Then alone you will be established in deep meditation.

Meditation follows concentration and samadhi (superconscious state) follows meditation. • Be courageous. You will come across various obstacles in meditation. You will have to conquer sleep, distraction, a taste for sensual pleasure, laziness, etc.

Practise asanas regularly.

Do a little tratak (gazing) and pranayama (yoga breathing). Do vichara (enquiry) . Cultivate vairagya (dispassion), You will conquer all obstacles. • Samadhi is that state of pure consciousness, the supreme blissful state, where the jivatma (soul) becomes one with paramatma (supreme being).

Light diet, dispassion, discrimination, contact with a teacher, are necessary for the practice of meditation. Meditation when perishisted in and perfected brings about the experience of superconsciousness or samadhi, the ultimate state of self-awareness or realisation.

When there is tension in the mind, when you cannot meditate, do kirtan or singing the Lord's name. You will get relaxation and concentration. Kirtan is nectar. Kirtan is divine food for the soul Kirtan develops divine love. Kirtan produces bhava samadhi. (ecstasy of devotion).

Samadhi leads to direct, intuitive realisation of the infinite. It is an inner divine experience, beyond the reach of speech and mind.

A jnani or sage will always be in samadhi, although engaged in worldly actions. One without full even-mindedness will never be able to go into samadhi even though he sits in padmasana for several hours. When all cravings cease, when one gets equal-vision, he attains jnana vision and Brahmic bliss.

28 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Spiritual experiences differ in sadhakas (seekers) according to the nature of their sadhana (practice) and the yoga they are practising. Some hear anahat (mystic) sounds in the ear. Some see brilliant lights. Some have vision of rishis (sages), mountains, rivers, etc.

Some experience cosmic consciousness. This is a rare experience. It cannot be expressed in words. Maya is the illusory power of the Lord. Maya hides the real and makes the unreal appear as real. Maya is shuddha (pure) satva.

Do not enquire now into the origin of maya. Strive for its destruction. Maya is indescribable. It can be crossed through the grace of God acquired by self-surrender When jnana is attained, then you will know all about maya.

Avidya is ignorance. It is the cause for bondage. Vidya is the cause for liberation. Destroy the root of avidya through knowledge of atman.

Avidya is the causal body of the individual soul. It is impure satva. It is mixed with rajas (activity) and tamas (inertia). Avidya is the cause for births and deaths. Mind and body are the effects of avidya.

Samadhi is union with God. It is a state of eternal bliss and eternal wisdom. It cannot be described in words. In savikalpa samadhi there is the triad, knower, knowledge, and knowable. In samadhi mind, intellect and senses cease functioning. All dualities vanish in toto.

Meditate ceaselessly and enjoy the supreme bliss of nirvikalpa samadhi.

Please note the difference between sleep and samadhi. Sleep is an inert state. But samadhi is a state of pure awareness or pure consciousness.

When a man returns from sleep, he is heavy and dull. He has no experience of wisdom of atman. But when the yogi comes down from samadhi, he is full of wisdom of atman.

29 FEBRUARY - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Jnana yoga is the yoga of wisdom. It is vedanta. It is the culmination of all the other yogas. It teaches that the individual soul is, in essence identical with the supreme Soul. When avidya (ignorance) is destroyed the individual soul merges in the supreme soul.

The aspirant should equip himself with the four means of salvation - study the scriptures (Upanishad) under a guru and meditate. He will attain self-realisation. The mind alone is the universe. The body with its organs, etc., is no other than mind.

The slayer of atman (self) is the mind only. The actions of the mind alone are, indeed actions, but not so those of the body. The mind contemplating upon the body becomes the body itself and then, enmeshed in it, is afflicted by it.

Slay the mind and attain eternal bliss.

He who has a guru knows Brahman. A guru alone can remove doubts, pitfalls and snares. Guru is God Himself. All that a guru can do is to tell his disciple the method of knowing the truth or the path that leads to the disclosure of the intuitional faculty.

He will clear your doubts, remove pitfalls and snares and inspire you. He cannot give you samadhi (superconscious state). You will have to place each step yourself on the rung of the ladder of yoga. Do not expect a miracle from your guru, to put you into samadhi.

Every man wants everlasting happiness. This is his innate feeling. This indicates that his soul is an embodiment of bliss.

Everybody wants full knowledge of everything. This gives the clue that atman is a mass of knowledge. Every man wants freedom. It gives the clue that his atman is ever free. Search within and attain the ever-blissful and ever free atman.

1 MARCH - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Now I will tell you what vichara is. Vichara means enquiry. It is an enquiry into the nature of Brahman or atman. Enquiry of, "Who am I" is also vichara.

What is bondage? What is freedom? What is the relation between the jiva and Brahman? How was this Universe born? Who is the Creator? These constitute vichara. Vichara leads to Brahma jnana (realisation of the Infinite).

You are imprisoned in this cage of flesh for a long time on account of your identification with the body. Cut this illusion with the sword of knowledge. "I am the all-pervading sat-chit-ananda Brahman" - and be ever blissful.

Give up "I-ness, mine-ness", agency or doership. Become a silent witness. This is wisdom. Brahman or the absolute is the only reality. Mind and the universe are unreal. Mind alone is the universe. Action of the mind alone is karma.

Renunciation of egoism and desires constitutes real renunciation. This leads to atma-jnana (self-knowledge). Practise Brahma vichara and you will soon attain self-realisation.

Identification with the body is bondage. Identification with the atman or soul is liberation. "I am body", "This is mine", "He is my son", "She is my wife" - this is bondage. "I am all-pervading immortal soul", "Nothing belongs to me", "All is Brahman" - this is liberation.

If the mind is attached to objects, this is bondage. If it is unattached, this is liberation. Where there is no duality, there is immortality. When the three knots are cut one attains immortality.

If your object in life is immortality, shun sense-objects as poison. Where there is nothing to be seen, or heard, or thought of, there is immortality. Immortality is the very nature of atman. The road to immortality is steep and thorny. The help of a realised sage is necessary, at every step.

2 MARCH - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Walk the Brahman way. Brahmacharya is walking with God or Brahman. Brahmacharya is the Brahman way.

Regard a woman as mother or Devi (goddess). This is brahmacharya of the eye. Hear not lustful talks. This is brahmacharya of the ear. Speak not of woman. This is brahmacharya of the tongue. Entertain not lustful thoughts. This is brahmacharya of the mind.

Brahman is supreme goodness. Rajas and tamas are the causes for evil, Evil is a mere appearance. It exists to glorify good. Evil is a kind of knowledge which shows the superiority of goodness, by way of comparison.

An evil man is a saint of the future. See good in everything. Destroy the evil-finding quality. Develop the good-finding quality. Rise above good and evil. Your real nature is essentially satchidananda Brahman. Thou art - the infinite, all-pervading, self-luminous, eternal atman, the supreme soul.

Tat Twam Asi. Thou art That.

Roar OM OM OM - Sivoham. Soham. Satchidananda Sivaroopoham. Come out of this cage of flesh. Know thy essential divine nature. Thou art the whole, the infinite, the absolute, the eternal, the immortal. Thou art above pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, all pairs of opposites.

Knock within. Search within. Gaze within. Within you is the immortal soul. • Aim at perfection. Fight life's battle bravely. Live wisely. Strengthen your resolution. Become one with the eternal.

Have tenacity of purpose. Climb the peak of perfection. Self-realisation is here and now. Attain life's goal. If you observe perfect physical brahmacharya (celibacy), you will have control over your temper. You will not become irritable. Gradually you can attempt to attain mental brahmacharya, through japa (repetition of God's name), meditation, discrimination and enquiry.

Brahmacharya is the first requisite for God-realisation. Brahmacharya is the pathway to the kingdom of God. May you be established in perfect brahmacharya.

3 MARCH - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Self-realisation is not a process. It is not a becoming. It is pure being. It is not a new thing to be attained.

The aspirant knows that he is the all-pervading, immortal soul. To know that is to become that. Self-realisation is direct, intuitive perception of the atman. All distinctions vanish. The sage is freed from fear, sorrow and pain.

Do not get false contentment. Do not imagine that you have reached the highest nirvikalpa state, and stop your sadhana (practice).

Slay spiritual pride. Shun the company of worldly persons who always talk on sexual matters, money and worldly topics.

Observe the laws of health and hygiene. Be moderate in eating and drinking. Do not overwork. This will produce fatigue.

Fight bravely in this battle of life. Be bold. Be cheerful. Be patient. Be wise.

Arm yourself with the shield of discrimination and the sword of dispassion. March forward courageously, O brave spiritual soldier. Yield not to temptations.

Yoga is an exact science. It aims at the harmonious development of the body, the mind and the soul.

Thou art divine. Live up to it. Feel and realise thy divine nature. Yoga of synthesis is a unique yoga. It is suitable for the vast majority of persons.

Man thinks, feels and wills. He must develop his heart, intellect and hand. Then alone can he attain perfection or integral development.

Everyone should have one yoga as a basic yoga. He must combine karma yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. This is the yoga of synthesis.

4 MARCH - EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Take stock of the past year. Turn back the leaves of your spiritual diary. Mark your spiritual progress. Note how far you have advanced in cultivating virtues, like humility, courage, truthfulness, cosmic love, purity, etc., and in the control of the senses.

Even if there is a set-back in certain things, nil desperandum. March forward, O adhyatmic (spiritual) hero. Look not back. A brilliant future is awaiting you.

God is the source of all happiness. All beings abide in Him. He is an embodiment of peace, wisdom and bliss. He is truth, love, beauty and goodness. All beings abide in Him.

God is one, God and His laws are one. God is love and law. God is pure spirit. God is the path and the goal. God alone is your real father, mother, friend and guru.

Realise God now and here and be happy for ever. The deeper a man's love of God is, the greater is his spiritual knowledge, in due proportion to his capacity and depth of love.

The final consummation of the love of God is union with God. Love of God is inborn in a man by virtue of his spiritual evolution. May you live in God.

To realise God is your duty. God-realisation is your birth-right. Develop strong yearning for God-realisation. Have confidence in your self. Be self-controlled. Be fiery in your determination. Stick to your resolves tenaciously.

Cultivate a very strong faith in God. Do total self-surrender and obtain His grace. May you be established in God-consciousness. I shall tell you about the nature of the atman or Brahman. The supreme self or atman abides in the chambers of your heart. It is the substratum of this world, mind, prana (life), body and senses.

It is satchidananda. It is immortal, infinite, eternal, ever pure, ever free, perfect and independent. It is one without a second. It is truth and wisdom. It is formless and attributeless.

5 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD (1)
MANTRA - 1
NOW YOGA IS EXPLAINED
Notes and Commentary

Yoga is the state wherein there is no sankalpa-vikalpa (thought or doubt). Yoga is the control of mind and its modifications. Yoga is the equal state between jivatma (soul) and paramatma (God). The word 'Yogi' signifies an aspirant or a student in the path of yoga, as well as a full-blown developed adept in yoga. He who is fully established in the highest nirvikalpa samadhi (superconsciousness) is a yogi. He who practises yoga is also a yogi. A 'raja yogi' is otherwise known as 'dhyana yogi'. Dhyana means meditation. It is the continuous flow of one idea of God. Raja yoga aims at controlling all thought-waves or mental modifications. It concerns with the mind, its purification and control. Hence it is called, 'raja yoga king of yogas.' It is otherwise known as ashtanga yoga (yoga with eight limbs).

A sutra means a thread or aphorism or terse saying. Each sutra is pregnant with high, sublime ideas. Without the help of commentary, it is difficult to understand the meanings of the aphorisms. Just as flowers or pearls are studded in a string or a thread, even so, philosophical or spiritual ideas are studded in a sutra or thread.

Food (ahara), sleep (nidra), fear (bhaya), and coition (maithuna) are common to both animals and human beings. But man has got intelligence, power of discrimination (viveka) and power of enquiry (vichara shakti); with the help of these special powers, he can realise his self and can know his true nature. Even devas (gods) are envious of human beings, because deva-yoni (divine species) is mere bhoga-yoni (enjoyment). They can enjoy only with a daivic (divine) body. Man has got both karma-yoni (activity) and bhoga-yoni. He can do nishkamya karma yoga and attain jnana through chittasuddhi (purity of mind). He can take recourse to various yogic practices for spiritual unfoldment and can become a full-blown yogi in this birth. Horses and dogs possess minds. But they have neither discrimination nor intelligence nor vichara shakti. Hence it is not possible for them to attain freedom.

You will find in Yajnavalkya Smriti that Hiranyagarbha was the original teacher of yoga. Patanjali Maharishi is only a compiler or explainer of the yogic principles and tenets taught and practised by Hiranyagarbha and others.

6 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD
MANTRA - 2
YOGA IS THE RESTRAINT OF THE THOUGHT-WAVES
Notes and Commentary

Now I proceed to explain the system of yoga philosophy in brief and bring home to the readers the salient and vital points in the yogic system. Yoga teaches how to control the vrittis (thought-waves) of the mind and get freedom. Yoga teaches how to curb the outgoing mind and attain one's pure state of bliss by going beyond the mind. Yoga teaches how to transmute the unregenerate nature and attain the state of divinity. Yoga is a complete suppression of the tendency of the mind to transform itself into objects, thoughts, etc.

Raja yoga is an exact science. One can ascend the yogic ladder patiently through its different rungs. The highest summit of the ladder is asamprajnata samadhi (superconsciousness), wherein all the samskaras (mental impressions), which bring about successive births, are absolutely fried up. The eight limbs of ashtanga yoga are: yama (self-restraint), niyama (religious observances or canons), asana (posture), pranayama (restraint of breath), pratyahara (abstraction of senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (super-conscious state).

This is one kind of classification of yoga: karma, upasana, raja yoga and jnana. This is yogatraya (three-fold yoga). Upasana is bhakti. Another classification is mantra yoga, laya yoga, hatha yoga and raja yoga. Mantra yoga is recitation of mantras as "Om Namah Sivaya" of Lord Siva, "Om Namo Narayanaya" of Lord Vishnu, Gayatri, etc. Laya yoga is kundalini yoga. Nada anusadhana (concentration on anahata sounds of heart) is also laya yoga. Laya means dissolution. The mind is dissolved in God.

Hatha yoga relates to the restraint of breath (pranayama), Asanas, bandhas, mudras, etc. 'Ha' and 'Tha' means the union of sun and moon, union of prana and apana. Hatha means any obstinate practice till the object or end is achieved. Hatha is sticking to some spiritual practices. Mauna (vow of silence), trataka (steady gazing), crystal-gazing, standing on one leg (a kind of austerity) etc., are all hatha practices. Hatha yoga is not separate from raja yoga. It prepares the student to take up raja yoga. Hatha yoga is concerned with the breath (prana) and the physical body. Pranayama purifies the pranamaya kosha (vital sheath).

7 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD
MANTRA - 3
THEN THERE IS COMMUNION WITH THE LORD
Notes and Commentary

The word 'Yoga' comes from the Sanskrit root 'Yuj' which means 'to join'. By the practice of yoga, the individual soul (jivatma) is united with the supreme soul (paramatma). Yoga means union with God. Then all samsara (cycle of birth and death) comes to an end.

Yoga kills all sorts of pain - miseries and tribulations. Yoga frees you from the samsaric wheel of birth and death. - Yoga gives you various powers and liberation through jnana (self-knowledge). Therefore drink the elixir or nectar of immortality and become a yogi. "Tasmat Yogi bhava Arjuna", Gita, Ch. VI - 46. Union with God is the goal of human life. It is the be-all and end-all of our existence. It is the summum bonum.

The Lord (Ishvara) of raja, yoga is a special purusha (person) who is not affected by the five afflictions and the fruit of actions and desires. His name or symbol is Om. He is indicated by the mono-syllable Om. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, etc.

SONG OF REAL SADHANA
Do real sadhana, my dear children (Do real sadhana ....)
sadhana - sadhana - sadhana - sadhana

To free yourself from birth and death
And enjoy the highest bliss
I will tell you the surest way
Kindly hearken with greatest care (Do real sadhana ....)

Acquire first sadhana chatushtaya,
Then proceed to the feet of sadguru,
After having shravan and manan,
Then do practise nidhidhyasan, (Do real sadhana ....)

Remove first the old, old dehaadhyas,
By repeating Sivoham Bhavana,
Then remove the veil, avarana,
You will rest in your own swaroop. (Do real sadhana ....)

8 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD
MANTRA - 4
LEARN THE YOGA UNDER A GURU
Notes and Commentary

Learn the yoga under a guru (preceptor). Then only will you be able to understand the subtle points. Get practical lessons also from him. Then alone you will grow rapidly. He will remove your doubts and show you the right path, because he has already trodden the path himself. He will point out the pitfalls, snares, etc., that tempt and deceive the aspirants on the path. He will inspire his disciples.

Just as water flows from a higher level to a lower level, so also the grace of the guru flows towards the disciple if the latter has a true receptive attitude and sincere faith in his guru. Just as electricity flows from a positive-charge battery towards the negative pole, even so the power, energy, love, wisdom and spiritual current flow from the master-mind of a yogi towards the lesser mind of the disciple.

Even in cooking and typewriting you want a guru to guide. When such is the case with ordinary matters and secular sciences, what to speak of the science of yoga which treats of sublime spiritual matters and transcendental questions? The mysteries of knowledge are handed down from guru to disciple.

Books also can help you. They will inspire you. They can guide you only to a certain extent. You will have to practise for yourself yama, niyama or the rules of right conduct before you approach a guru. You can start the minor practices asana, pranayama, some concentration exercises etc., with the help of books. Books written by realised persons can serve the purpose of a guru till you come in personal contact with a realised yogi or adept. You can also get help from senior aspirants in the path of yoga.

Make a programme of your life. Draw up a spiritual routine. Stick to it systematically and regularly. Apply diligently. Never waste a single minute. Life is short. Time is fleeting. That "tomorrow" will never come - now or never. Stand up with a firm resolve: "I will become a yogi this very moment." Gird up your loins. Do rigid, constant yoga sadhana or yoga abhyasa. If you are very sincere in your practice and if your mind is filled with burning vairagya (dispassion) and keen longing for liberation (mumukshatwa), you can reach perfection within six months.

9 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD
MANTRA - 5
A VRITTI IS A 'WHIRLPOOL' IN THE MIND-LAKE
Notes and Commentary

Vritti literally means a whirlpool. It is a thought-wave in the lake of chitta. Chitta is the mind-stuff or mental substance. It takes various forms. These forms constitute vrittis. It gets transformed or modified (parinama). These transformations and modifications are the thought-waves, whirlpools or vrittis. If the chitta thinks of a mango, the vritti of a mango is formed in the lake of chitta. This will subside and another vritti will be formed when it thinks of milk (milk-vritti). Countless vrittis are rising and subsiding in the ocean of chitta. These vrittis cause restlessness of mind. Why do vrittis arise from chitta? Because of samskaras (habits) and vasanas (desires). If you annihilate all desires, all vrittis will subside by themselves. When a vritti subsides it leaves a definite impression in the subconscious mind. It is known as samskara or latent impression. The sum-total of all samskaras is known as karmashaya (receptacle of works). This is sanchita karma (accumulated work). When a man leaves the physical body, he carries with him his astral body of seventeen tatvas and the karmashaya as well to the mental plane. This karmashaya is burnt by the highest knowledge obtained through asamprajnata samadhi.

Modification is a vritti in the mind. When the vritti subsides it assumes the subtle state of potency or samskara in the chitta or subconscious mind. This potency again becomes a vritti under suitable conditions, when the mind comes in contact with sensual objects or through memory of objects from stimulus within. There are degrees in the vrittis or modifications that arise from the mind. You can check or control the lower vritti with the help of higher vrittis or transformations. For instance, anger is a lower vritti or a vritti of a lower degree. Kshama (forgiveness) is a vritti of a higher degree. With the help of kshama you can control the lower vritti, anger. You can become a yogarudha (one who is established in yoga) by controlling all the vrittis of the mind. The yogi does not annihilate himself by controlling all the vrittis or modifications of the mind. By suppressing the transformations of the mind he acquires great powers. He becomes an (adept or perfect being) siddha.

10 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 5 (CONTINUED)

Although the mind is one, it passes into many conditions or states, as it is made up of three qualities (gunas)- satva, rajas and tamas. All these qualities enter into a variety of combinations. The modifications or vrittis of the mind are also various. Peace of mind is a satvic vritti. Lust is a rajasic vritti. Laziness is a tamasic vritti.

By destroying the vrittis one by one, you gain more and more mental strength (manasic bala) and spiritual strength (atma bala). Do the practice and feel the strength yourself. The annihilation of even one vritti will give you strength to destroy the second vritti that is tormenting you. Patience, perseverance and perishistent sadhana are necessary. How difficult is it to get the M.A. degree? How much more difficult should it be, if you want to attain the state of immortality and absolute freedom? Just as you remove a small pebble that causes irritation to your feet, so also you should then and there remove every vritti that torments the mind. Unless and until you are able to do so, you have not gained any real mental strength or spiritual power. Just as you extract a tooth and then chuck it away, so also you should extract a disturbing vritti and cast it aside. Raja yoga teaches how to extract or root out the disturbing thoughts. You will have to pay a heavy price for mastering this yoga.

Ignorant people identify themselves with the body, mind and the vrittis of the mind. The mind and the body are instruments only. The real man is behind the mind. If you become one with the mind, body and vritti, you get various sorts of miseries and sufferings. The whole universe is created by the vrittis of the mind only. If these mental waves or thought-waves subside, you can attain the absolute state. Just as you can clearly see the bottom of a lake when the ripples and waves subside, so also you can cognise your real self when the vrittis that agitate your mind subside.

11 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 6

THOUGHT IS A THING. THOUGHT IS A DYNAMIC FORCE

Notes and Commentary

Thought is as much a thing as the yonder piece of stone. It has weight, colour, shape, size and form. Thought is a dynamic force. It is caused by the vibrations of psychic prana (sukshma prana) on the mental substance. It is a force like gravitation, cohesion or repulsion. Thought travels or moves. Thought has got tremendous power. Thought can heal diseases. Thoughts can transform the mentality of persons. Thought can do anything. It can work wonders. The velocity of thought is unimaginable.

Thought is a finer force. This is supplied to us by food. If you read Chandogya Upanishad - the dialogue between Uddalaka and Swetaketu - you will understand this point well. If the food is pure, thought also becomes pure. He who has pure thoughts speaks very powerfully and produces deep impression on the minds of the hearers by his speech. He influences thousands of persons through his pure thoughts. A pure thought is sharper than the edge of a razor. Entertain always pure sublime thoughts. Thought-culture is an exact science.

Thinking is of four kinds, viz., symbolic thinking, instinctive thinking, impulsive thinking and habitual thinking. Thinking through words is symbolic thinking. Instincts are more powerful than impulses. Thoughts of body, food, drink, bath, etc., are habitual thinking. You can stop easily symbolic thinking. It is difficult to stop instinctive and impulsive thinking.

Thought is a great force. Thought has tremendous power. It can be transmitted from one man to another man. You can move the world through thought-force. The powerful thoughts of great sages (rshis) of yore are still recorded in the akasha (akashic records). Yogis who have clairvoyant vision can perceive those thought-images. They can read them. You are surrounded by an ocean of thought. You are floating in the ocean of thought. You are absorbing certain thoughts and repelling some in the thought world.

Every one has his own thought-world. Through practice of yama, niyama, pranayama and meditation, you can change impure thoughts into suitable pure thoughts. Meditation fills the mind with cheerful, powerful, satvic thoughts.

12 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 7

CHITTA IS THE MIND-STUFF FROM WHICH THE VRITTIS ARISE

Notes and Commentary

The thinking principle is a comprehensive expression equivalent to the sanskrit term antahkarana. Antahkarana is a broad term used in vedanta. It includes manas (mind), buddhi (intellect), chitta and ahamkara (egoism or self-asserting principle).

The one mind assumes the three other forms, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara according to the different functions it performs (vrittibheda), just as one man is a judge in courts, president in a sabha, store-keeper in a store and general secretary of a managing committee. Manas is a sankalpavikalpatmaka (willing and doubting), It thinks whether to go to a place or not, whether to do this or not, and whether this is good or bad. The mind is of a doubting nature.

Buddhi (intellect) nischayatmaka (certitude). It is the determining faculty, It is that light of buddhi that determines one way or the other. I must go to Dehra Dun by this evening train. I must do this work. This is good.

Chitta does the function of anusandhana (contemplation) and dharana (concentration). The function of memory also belongs to chitta. According to yoga philosophy, chitta is the mind-stuff or the mental substance; and the mind, intellect, and egoism are various processes in the mind-stuff.

Ahamkara is the self-arrogating principle. It does the function of abhimana (identification). It creates mamata (mineness). This is the root cause of all human sufferings. All vrittis hang upon this one "Aham Vritti" ("I" thought). It is the root cause of human ignorance.

It should be distinctly borne in mind that the thinking principle - mind - is not the atman (self) who is the fountain-source of all consciousness or knowledge. Just as a piece of iron moves in the presence of a mighty magnet, so also the little mind moves in the presence of the majestic atman. Just as a minister works with fear in the presence of a king, so also the mind works in the same way in the presence of the king of kings, the atman. Just as a mirror borrows its light from the sun, so also the mind borrows its light from the atman, the Supreme Being.

13 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 8

PERCEPTION COMES ONLY WHEN THE MIND IS CONNECTED WITH THE CENTRE AND EXTERNAL INSTRUMENT

Notes and Commentary

Modification of mind is known as parinama. When milk is changed into curd, it is also parinama. Even so the mind gets modified into a vritti by assuming the form of the object it perceives. Knowledge of perception is a kind of transformation (parinama) of the mind.

Some people sleep with their eyes open. The object is there. The centre of vision is there and yet they cannot see the object. Why? Because the mind is not there. Therefore three things are necessary for perception of an object viz., the physical instrument, the external fleshy eyes which act as windows to the soul; the centre of the vision in the brain and the mind. It is the mind that really sees. It is the commander of the five senses. The senses carry the vibrations from outside to the mind. They are avenues of sense-knowledge.

According to Sankhya philosophy, it is the purusha or soul that is the real perceiver of an object. The sense transmits the sense-vibrations to the mind, and the mind in its turn presents the vibrations to the prime minister of the soul, the buddhi or intellect, the discriminative faculty, which is very close to the soul. Now, reaction comes in. With the reaction of the buddhi egoism manifests side by side. Then the whole thing is presented to purusha who really perceives all objects.

If the physical instrument, eye, is not in a good working order owing to cataract or any other disease, you cannot have perception of an object. The eye may be all right, but if the centre of vision that is situated in the occipital lobe of the brain at the back of the skull does not function properly owing to the diseases of this particular lobe of the brain, in that case also you can have hardly any perception of any object. The eye and the centre of the vision may be in sound condition, but if the mind is not linked with the centre and the external eye, you can hardly have perception of any object. Sometimes a man says: "I did not hear. I did not see. My mind was elsewhere." You will find such instances in your daily life.

14 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 8 (CONTINUED)

PERCEPTION COMES ONLY WHEN THE MIND IS CONNECTED WITH THE CENTRE AND EXTERNAL INSTRUMENT

When you are deeply engaged in solving a mathematical problem, you do not hear any sound though your friends shout loudly by your side. Tram-cars and motor cars run about in the street. If you are deeply engaged in something, you do not hear them. Why? Because your mind was not linked with the organ of hearing. The indriyas cannot do anything by themselves. They need the help of their master, the mind, at every moment. It is the mind that sees, hears, tastes, smells and feels. Senses simply transmit the sense-vibrations from outside to the mind.

The table that you see is a mental kalpana (imagination). This table, though you see it externally, really exists in your mind. A mental picture or image plus external something is the table. That which exists outside is unknown and unknowable. Mind reacts to external vibrations and you see the external universe. If there is no mind there is no universe. Where is the world for you during deep sleep? Hence this world is termed as manomatra jagat or manahkalpita jagat. This mind is the universe. There is no world apart from the mind.

How can a tiny lens produce a big image of a mountain? A small image is produced by the lens, the retina and the optic centre. It is the mind that develops and enlarges it. All the pictures do already exist in the mind. What you perceive as a big mountain outside is only the mental image plus some external unknowable something.

If you say: 'there is nothing outside' why do you run after food and water when you are hungry and thirsty? If everything is within, you should get satisfaction from hunger and thirst from within only. But it is not the case. There is something outside, call it a vivarta appearance) of Brahman, vilasa (expansion) of maya, chamatkara (trick) of avidya (ignorance), parinama (modification) of Vishnu, electrical waves of scientists, combination of anus (atoms) of Kanada or tatva (elemental) vilasa. It does not matter much.

15 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 9

PLEASURE ALSO MUST BE GIVEN UP AS PAIN

Notes and Commentary

Pleasure that is derived from sensual objects gives pain to one who discriminates. Worldly-minded persons who have lost the faculty of discrimination, rejoice in sensual objects on account of lack of discrimination. They weep in old age. You weep when you are born. You weep when you die. You weep in the interval also. Where then is pleasure in the world? Learn to discriminate. Become a yogi. Yoga will put an end to all sorts of pain. Yoga will destroy all kleshas (afflictions). Wake up. Open your eyes. Practise yoga, my child!

Sensual pleasure is momentary, deceptive, illusory and imaginary. A mustard seed of pleasure is mixed with a mountain of pain. Enjoyment cannot bring about satisfaction of a desire. On the contrary it makes the mind more restless after enjoyment through intense craving (trisnas and vasanas). Sensual pleasure is the cause of birth and death. This body is nothing but a mass of flesh, bone, and all sorts of filth.

Place before the mind the fruits of self-realisation or life in the soul or Brahman or the eternal such as immortality, eternal bliss, supreme peace and infinite knowledge. If you remember these points always, the mind will be weaned from the cravings for sensual pleasure. Vairagya, viveka and mumukshatwa (dispassion, discrimination from the real and unreal and keen longing for liberation from birth and death) will dawn. You should seriously look into the defects of the sensual life and into the unreal nature of worldly life.

Just as pure gold which has been treated in the crucible with borax etc., and rendered pure, shines brilliantly, so also the yogi, whose mind is rendered pure by the agents of vairagya and abhyasa, becomes a lustrous person.

16 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 10

PRAKRTI OPERATES THROUGH THREE GUNAS

Notes and Commentary

Satva, rajas and tamas are the three gunas or qualities of the mind. Satva is purity or light or knowledge. Rajas is passion or activity. Tamas is inertia or darkness. By checking rajas and tamas you can increase the satva. When the satva is increased the mind becomes steady like the flame of a lamp in a windless place. He who is satvic can do real concentration and meditation and can enter into samadhi (superconscious state) easily. A rajasic man loves power and objects of sense. A tamasic man does vicious actions on account of ignorance. Satva cannot stand by itself. It is mixed with disturbing rajas and tamas. When there is preponderance of satva, rajas and tamas get controlled. But they lurk in the mind all the same.

Where there is increase of satva, there is brightness, lightness, joy, purity, strength, peace and illumination. Your important duty is to increase satva and control the senses and the mind. Other duties are secondary only. A sensible man only can understand this point.

The mind is wandering (ksipta) and unsteady through the disturbing energy rajas (passion) which makes the mind run towards various sensual objects. The mind becomes (mudha) forgetful when it is filled with tamas (inertia). Deep sleep supervenes on account of excess of tamas.

17 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 11

DHARANA (CONCENTRATION) IS FIXING THE MIND ON AN IDEA OR A POINT OR OBJECT EITHER INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL

Notes and Commentary

It is very difficult to say where concentration ends and meditation begins. Meditation follows concentration. Purify the mind first through the practice of yama (self control) and niyama (discipline). Then take to the practice of dharana. Concentration without purity is of no use. There are some occultists who are much advanced in concentration. But they have no good character. That is the reason why they do not make any progress in the spiritual path. Some foolish, impatient yogic students take to dharana at once without undergoing the preliminary ethical training. They want to have a long jump. They break their legs and fall down. This is a serious blunder. Ethical perfection is of paramount importance.

Concentration is steadfastness of mind. If you remove all causes of distraction, your power of concentration will increase. A true Brahmachari (celibate) who has preserved his virya (vitality) will have wonderful concentration. Attention plays a prominent part in concentration. He who has developed his power of attention will have good concentration. You should be able to visualise very clearly the object of concentration even in its absence. You must call up the mental picture in a moment's notice. If you have good practice in concentration you can do this without difficulty. He who has gained success in pratyahara (abstraction) by withdrawing the indriyas (senses) from the various objects will have good concentration. You will have to march in the spiritual path step by step, stage by stage. Lay the foundation of yama (right conduct), niyama, asana (posture) , pranayama and pratyahara to start with. The super structure of dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi will be successful then only.

Asana is bahiranga sadhana (external practice); dhyana is antaranga sadhana (internal). When compared with dhyana and samadhi, even dharana is bahiranga sadhana. He who has steady asana and has purified the yoga-nadis and the pranamaya kosha (vital sheath) through pranayama will be able to concentrate easily.

18 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

You can concentrate internally on any of the seven plexus or cakras or centres of spiritual energy, or at the tip of the nose, or tip of the tongue or externally on the picture of any devata (deity), Hari, Hara, Krishna or Devi. You can concentrate on the tick-tick sound of a watch or the flame of a candle, or on a black point on a wall, or on a pencil or rose flower or any pleasing object. This is concrete concentration. There can be no concentration without something upon which the mind may rest. The mind can be fixed easily on a pleasing object such as jasmine flower, mango, orange or a loving friend. It is difficult to fix the mind in the beginning on any object which it dislikes such as faecal matter, cobra, enemy, ugly face, etc. Practise concentration till the mind is well established on the object of concentration. When the mind runs away from the object of concentration, bring it back again and again to the object. Lord Krishna says: "As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the self". (Gita Ch. VI - 26.)

If you want to increase your power of concentration you will have to reduce your worldly activities. You will have to observe mauna (vow of silence) for two hours daily. A man whose mind is filled with passion and all sorts of fantastic desires can hardly concentrate on any object even for a second. His mind will be oscillating like a balloon. Regulate and master the breath. Subdue the senses and then fix the mind on any pleasing object. Associate the ideas of holiness and purity with the object.

You can concentrate on the space between the two eyebrows (trikuti). You can concentrate on the mystic sounds (anahata dhvani) that you hear from your right ear. You can concentrate on Om picture. The picture of Lord Krishna with flute in hand and the picture of Lord Vishnu with conch, discus, mace and lotus are very good for concentration. You can concentrate on the picture of your guru or any saint also. Vedantins try to fix the mind on atman, the inner self. This is their dharana.

Dharana is the sixth stage or limb of ashtanga yoga or raja yoga of Patanjali Maharshi. In dharana you will have only one vritti or wave in the mind-lake. The mind assumes the form of only one object. All other operations of the mind are suspended or stopped. He who can practise real concentration for half or one hour will have tremendous psychic powers. His 'will' also will be very powerful.

19 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 11 (CONTINUED)

When hatha yogis concentrate their minds on the six supports (the sad-cakras), they concentrate their minds on the respective presiding deities also, viz., Ganesa, Brahma, Visnu, Rudra Ishvara and Sadasiva. Control the breath through pranayama. Subdue the senses through pratyahara. And thin fix the mind either on a form or the formless Brahman. According to hatha yogic school, a yogi who can suspend his breath by kumabhak for 20 minutes can have very good dharana. He will have a very tranquil mind. Pranayama steadies the mind, removes vikshepa (distraction) and increases the power of concentration. Those who practise khecari mudra by cutting the frenum lingue and lengthening the tongue and fixing it in the hole in the palate by taking upwards will have good dharana.

Those who practise concentration evolve quickly. They can do any work with scientific accuracy and great efficiency. What others do in six hours can be done by one who has concentration within half an hour. What others can read in six hours, can be read by one who does concentration within half an hour. Concentration purifies and calms the surging emotions,, strengthens the current of thought and clarifies the ideas. Concentration helps a man in his material progress also. He will turn out a very good amount of work in his office or business house. What was cloudy and hazy before becomes clear and definite. What was difficult before becomes easy now and what was complex, bewildering and confusing before comes easily within the mental grasp. You can achieve anything through concentration. Nothing is impossible for a man who practises regular concentration. It is very difficult to practise concentration when one is hungry and when one is suffering from an acute disease. He who practises concentration will possess very good health and very clear mental vision.

If you read with concentration the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana or the eleventh skandha of Bhagavatam several times, you will get new ideas each time. Through concentration you will get penetrative insight. Subtle, esoteric meanings will flash out in the field of mental consciousness. You will understand inner depths of philosophical significance. When you concentrate on any object do not wrestle with the mind. Avoid tension anywhere in the body or mind. Think gently of the object in a continuous manner. Do not allow the mind to wander away.

20 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 11 (CONTINUED)

Retire into a quiet room; sit on padmasana. Close your eyes. See what happens when you concentrate on an apple. You may think of its colour, shape, size and its different parts such as skin, pulp, seeds, etc. You may think of the places (Australia or Kashmere) wherefrom it is imported. You may think of its acidic or sweet taste and its effects on the digestive system and blood. Through law of association ideas of some other fruits also may try to enter. The mind may entertain some other extraneous ideas. It may begin to wander about. It may think of meeting a friend at the railway station at 4 p.m. It may think of purchasing a towel or a tin of tea and biscuits. It may ponder over some unpleasant happening that occurred the previous day. You must try to have a definite line of thought. There must not be any break in the line of thinking. You must not allow other thoughts which are not connected with the object on hand to enter. You will have to struggle hard to get success in this direction. The mind will try its level best to run in the old grooves and to take its old familiar road or old beaten path. The attempt is somewhat like going uphill. You will rejoice when you get even some success in concentration. Just as law of gravitation, cohesion, etc., operate in the physical plane, so also definite laws of thought such as law of association, law of relativity, law of continuity, etc., operate in the mental plane or thought-world. Those who practise concentration should thoroughly understand these laws. When the mind thinks of an object, it may think of its qualities and its parts also. When it thinks of a cause, it may think of its effects also.

If emotions disturb you during concentration, do not mind them. They will pass away soon. If you try to drive them, you will have to tax your will-force. Have an indifferent attitude. The vedantin uses the formulae: "I don't care. Get out. I am a sakshi (witness of the mental modifications)" to drive the emotions. The devotee simply prays and help comes from God.

Train the mind in concentration on various subjects, gross and subtle, and of various sizes, small, medium, and big. In course of time a firm habit of concentration will be formed. The moment you sit for concentration the mood will come at once quite easily. When you read a book, you must read it with concentration. There is no use skipping over the pages in a hurried manner. Read one page in the Gita. Close the book. Concentrate on what you have read. Find out parallel lines in Mahabharata, Upanishads and Bhagavatam. Compare and contrast.

21 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 11 CONTINUED

For a neophyte, the practice of concentration is disgusting and tiring in the beginning. He has to cut new grooves in the mind and brain. After some months he will get great interest in concentration. He will enjoy a new kind of happiness, the concentration-ananda. He will become restless if he fails to enjoy this new kind of happiness even on one day. Concentration is the only way to get rid of the worldly miseries and tribulations. Your only duty is to practise concentration. You have taken this physical body to practise concentration and through concentration to realise the self. Charity, rajasuya yajna are nothing when compared with concentration. They are playthings only.

Through vairagya (dispassion), pratyahara and practice of concentration, the dissipated rays of wandering mind are slowly collected. Through steady practice it is rendered one-pointed. How happy and strong is that yogi who has one-pointed mind! He can turn out voluminous work in the twinkling of an eye.

Those who practise concentration off and on will have only occasionally a steady mind. Sometimes the mind will begin to wander and will be quite unfit for application. You must have a mind that will obey you at all times sincerely and carry out all your commands in the best possible manner at anytime. Steady and systematic practice of raja yoga will make the mind very obedient and faithful.

There are five yoga bhumikas or stages or five stages of the mind, viz., kshipta (wandering), mudha (forgetfulness), vikshipta (gathering mind), ekagra (one-pointed), niruddha (controlled or well restrained). By gradual and well regulated practice of concentration daily, the rays of the wandering mind are collected. It becomes one pointed. Eventually it is curbed properly. It comes under proper control.

If the aspirant pursues what is not fitting, his progress is painful and sluggish. He who pursues what is fitting gets easy progress and quick intuition. He who has no past spiritual samskaras (tendencies) of previous birth makes painful progress. One who has such samskaras makes easy progress. In one whose nature is actually corrupt and whose controlling faculties are weak, progress is painful and intuition is sluggish. But to one of keen controlling faculties progress is rapid and intuition is quick. In one overcome by ignorance, intuition is sluggish; to one not so overcome, intuition is rapid.

22 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 12

DHYANA OR MEDITATION IS THE KEEPING UP OF FLOW OF ONE IDEA LIKE THE FLOW OF OIL

NOTES AND COMMENTARY

Meditation is of two kinds, viz., concrete and abstract. If you meditate on any picture of concrete object, it is concrete meditation. If you meditate on an abstract idea, on any quality (such as mercy, tolerance), it is abstract meditation. A beginner should practise concrete meditation. For some, abstract meditation is more easy than concrete.

The aspirant can take up the practice of meditation after he is well up in pratyahara (abstraction of senses) and concentration. If the senses are turbulent, if the mind cannot be fixed on one point, no meditation is possible even within hundreds of years. One should go stage by stage, step by step. The mind should be withdrawn again and again to the point when it runs. One should reduce his wants and renounce all sorts of wild, vain desires of the mind. A desireless man only can sit quiet and practise meditation. Satvic (pure) light diet and brahmacharya (celibacy) are the pre requisites for the practice of meditation.

Consciousness is of two kinds, viz., focusing consciousness and marginal consciousness. When you concentrate on trikuti, the space midway between the two eye-brows, your focusing consciousness is on the trikuti. When some flies sit on your left hand during meditation, you drive them with your right hand. When you become conscious of the flies it is called marginal consciousness.

A seed which has remained in fire for a second will not undoubtedly sprout into leaves even though sown in a fertile soil. Even so a mind that does meditation for some time but runs towards sensual objects on account of unsteadiness will not bring in the full fruits of yoga.

23 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 13

SAMADHI IS OF TWO KINDS, SAMPRAJNATA AND ASAMPRAJNATA

NOTES AND COMMENTARY

Samadhi means super-conscious state, wherein the yogi gets super-sensual experiences. Samadhi is of two kinds viz., samprajnata or sabija or savikalpa and asamprajnata or nirbija or nirvikalpa. In savikalpa samadhi there are triputi (triad) - the knower, knowledge and knowable. There is alambana (support) for the mind to lean upon. The samskaras (tendencies) are not fried. In nirvikalpa, there is neither triputi nor alambana. The samskaras are fried in toto. The nirvikalpa samadhi only can destroy birth and death, and bring in highest knowledge and bliss. Savikalpa samadhi's of various - kinds - savitarka and nirvitarka, savichara and nirvichara, sa-ananda, and asmita.

When you get full success or perfection (siddhi) in raja yoga by entering into asamprajnata samadhi (nirvikalpa state) all the samskaras and vasanas (conditioning) which bring on rebirths are totally fried up. All vrittis (mental modifications) that arise from the mind-lake - come under restraint. The five afflictions, viz., avidya (ignorance), asmita (egoism), raga-dvesha (love and hatred), and abhinivesha (clinging to life) are destroyed and the bonds of karma are annihilated. Control the mind and the senses, become desireless, develop the power of endurance, contemplate, see the self in the self. Samadhi brings on highest good (nishreyas) and exaltation (abhyudaya). It gives moksha (deliverance from the wheel of births and deaths). The afflictions, egoism, etc., have their root in avidya (ignorance). With the advent of the knowledge of the self, the ignorance vanishes. With the disappearance of the root cause, viz., ignorance, egoism, etc., also disappear.

In the asamprajnata samadhi, all the modifications of the mind are completely restrained. All the residual samskaras also are totally burnt. This is the highest samadhi of raja yoga. This is also - known as nirbija samadhi (without seeds) and nirvikalpa samadhi. Dharma megha in raja yoga means "the cloud of virtue". Just as clouds shower rain, so also this dharma-megha samadhi showers on the yogis omniscience and all sorts of siddhis (powers). Karma is the seed for life state, life period and life experience. Nirbija samadhi will burn all the seeds.

24 MARCH - YOGASARA-UPANISHAD

MANTRA - 14

THE YOGI SEPARATES HIMSELF FROM THE THREE GUNAS (QUALITIES) AND ATTAINS KAIVALYA

Notes and Commentary

By increasing the satvic modifications of the mind such as kshama (forgiveness), love, mercy, magnanimity, generosity, truthfulness, celibacy, you can destroy the rajasic and tamasic mental vrittis. Internal fight is ever going on between gunas - satva, rajas and tamas, between good vrittis and evil vrittis.

If satva predominates in the mind, thoughts of God, Brahma-vichara (enquiry into truth) will manifest. The mind will be one-pointed. The meditative mood will come by itself without any exertion. In spiritual neophytes the satvic state of mind will not last for a long time. Rajas and tamas will try to rush in. You will have to be very careful and vigilant. You will have to watch the mind through careful introspection Your important duty is to increase the satva in the mind. A satvic man will be ever virtuous, God-loving, dispassionate and powerful. A rajasic man will be ever engaged in worldly activities. He wants to lord over people. He has a domineering attitude. He wants powers. He is much attached to wife, children and property. The dross or impurities of the mind - rajas and tamas - should be removed by heating the mind in the fire of vairagya and abhyasa (dispassion and spiritual practices of sadhana). Then alone you will become a dhyana yogi.

Eventually the purusha (soul) realises his own native state of divine glory, isolation or absolute independence (kaivalya). He has completely disconnected himself from the prakrti and its effects. He feels his absolute freedom and attains kaivalya, the highest goal of a raja yogi. All klesha-karmas are destroyed now. The gunas, having fulfilled their objects of enjoyment and evolution, now entirely cease to act. He has simultaneous knowledge now. The past and future are blended into present. Everything is "now". Everything is "here". He has transcended time and space. The sum-total of all knowledge of the three worlds, of all secular sciences is nothing, nothing, compared to the infinite knowledge of a yogi who has attained kaivalya. Glory, glory to such exalted yogis. May their blessings be upon us all!

25 MARCH - THE SUPREME GIFT

Yoga is the supreme gift of India to the world at large. Yoga does not quarrel with science ; it supplements it. Yoga is a methodical way to attain perfection, through the control of the different elements of human nature -both physical and psychical.

Yoga is the supreme science of contacting reality. It is perfection in action. It is equanimity of attitude. It is perfect peace. Yoga is union with God.

Yoga is not a thing merely to be heard. Yoga is a thing that has to be assimilated and put into practice in daily life. The practice of yoga enables one to realise unity with the whole world. It is living in tune with God.

Yoga is abiding by the principles of truth and avoiding the path of untruth. Yoga is a science which is meant for the study of the reflective. It is for those who are convinced that the world of the senses has nothing substantial to offer.

Yoga is a process of continuous transformation. The inner perfection of self realisation can only come to be revealed by experience. This happens only progressively. The transformation of one's personality is achieved through stages.

As you advance in yoga, the ego is progressively replaced by the spirit. It is through this that the will of God works. By the practice of yoga, the sadhaka (seeker) is freed from the tyranny of the lower mind and he becomes divine. At a later stage the transformation takes the shape of a progressive unfoldment of the spirit.

A preceptor or guru is indispensable for the practice of yoga. The aspirant should be humble, simple, gentle, refined, tolerant, merciful and kind. You will not have success in yoga if you have desire to get psychic powers. Yoga does not consist of sitting cross-legged for six hours, nor in stopping the heart-beat, nor in getting buried in the ground for a week or a month.

26 MARCH - YOGA IS ETERNAL LIFE

Yoga is a perfect and practical system of self-culture. Yoga is an exact science, it aims at the harmonious development of the body, the mind and the soul.

Yoga is the turning away of the senses from the objective universe and concentrating it on the mind within. Yoga is eternal life in the spirit.

Yoga aims at controlling the mind and its modifications. The path of yoga is an inner path, whose gateway is your heart. Yoga is the discipline of the mind, the senses and the physical body. It helps to control and co-ordinate the subtle forces within the body.

Yoga brings perfection, peace and everlasting happiness. Yoga helps you in your business and also in your daily life. Through yoga you can have a calm mind and a peaceful sleep.

Through yoga you can also have increased energy, vigour, vitality, longevity and a high standard of health. Yoga transmutes your animal nature into divine nature. It raises you to the pinnacle of divine glory and splendour.

The practice of yoga will help you to control your emotions and passions. It will give you the power to resist temptations and to remove disturbing elements from the mind.

Yoga enables you to keep a balanced mind always. It removes fatigue. It confers on you serenity, calmness, and wonderful concentration. It will enable you to hold communion with the Lord and thus attain self-realisation.

If you want to attain success in yoga you will have to abandon all worldly enjoyments. You will have to practise tapas, (austerity) and brahmacharya (celibacy).

To curb the mind you have to use intelligent and judicious methods - because, if you use force, the mind becomes more turbulent and mischievous. Those who try to control the mind by force are like those who endeavour to bind a furious elephant with a silken thread.

27 MARCH - WHAT IS YOGA?

Yoga is the science that teaches us the way, the most effective way, how to remove our defects and weaknesses, and how to attain the state of perfection, freedom and super-conscious blessedness. The state in which there is union with the absolute.

Yoga enables its students to acquire perfect control over the physical body, the mind and the senses. Yoga shows you the marvellous method of rising from evil to goodness and from goodness to godliness, and then from godliness to divine splendour.

Yoga is a search for truth. It raises a man to spiritual eminence. This form of self education is called yoga. The yogi observes the law of moderation at all times. He treads the middle path. He does not torture his body, but he does regulate his eating and sleeping. He does regulate his talking and working.

Yoga is your unique heritage. Proceed upon this path gradually and steadily. Nothing can be achieved overnight. But steady practice will certainly bestow great blessings in the long run. Yoga has an unparalleled utility and curative value not yet tapped by modern medical science.

The practice of yoga is not opposed to any religion. It is not opposed to any sacred church. It is purely spiritual and universal in its teachings. It does not contradict anyone's sincere faith.

Yoga does not want you to turn away from life; it demands spiritualization of life. Yoga brings about physical and spiritual development, side by side. And finally, yoga enables the aspirant to attain blissful union with the supreme being. When yoga gets ripened, it becomes the super-conscious state. It becomes the state called nirvikalpa samadhi (realisation of the absolute).

Apply yourself tenaciously to self-enquiry and meditation. Be vigilant. Be diligent. Kill thoughts and desires of the world, through holy desires. Slay unholy thoughts with holy thoughts. Thus gain victory over your destiny. There is a vast ocean of knowledge within you. Unfold. Become a jivanmukta (a liberated soul). Remember, God helps those who help themselves.

28 MARCH - YOGA

There are people who have not been able to serve their preceptors, who have not done any selfless service, or any devotional practices, who have not had the heart to treat other children with the affection they show to their own, who may not have had the heart to help others who were in severe distress - and yet, they sit and speak high philosophy. They sit and speak of cosmic love, of cosmic vision and of their own spiritual experiences and realisation (brahma jnana). They repeat the mantra Sivoham Sivoham ("I am Siva") - or the mantra Aham Brahma Asmi ("I am the infinite") - every few minutes. They wish to be in contact with great avataras (incarnations of God) this very second.

Place your foot, step by step, very cautiously, on the different rungs of the ladder of yoga. Ascend very gradually to the summit. Be earnest in your sadhana (practice). Equip yourself with the necessary qualifications. Do not waste your time in search of a preceptor. When you are ready, you will enter the halls of wisdom. And there, waiting on the threshold, you will find your preceptor.

Sage Vasishta says: "I assure you. on the authority of my own intuitional knowledge, as well as that of other illumined souls, that the reality can be realised by man. But one who has known it cannot communicate it to others, for want of means." Even the knowledge acquired by the five senses, which are common to all, cannot be communicated to others. You cannot tell the taste of butter to a man who has never tasted it. Nor can you communicate the idea of colour to a man born blind.

All that a teacher can do is to tell his disciple the method of knowing the truth. All he can do is to tell the disciple of the path that leads to unfoldment of the intuitional faculty.

If you have a burning desire, like Lord Buddha, if you possess patience and forgiveness, and if you have devotion to the preceptor - then you can contact avataras and sages right now, this very second.

29 MARCH - UNDERSTAND NATURE

Every man should have a comprehensive understanding of nature's laws, and their operations. Then he can pull on in this world smoothly and happily. He can utilise the helping forces to serve his ends in the best possible manner. He can neutralise the hostile or antagonistic currents. Just as the fish swims against the current, so also he will be able to go against the hostile currents by adjusting himself properly and safeguarding himself through suitable precautionary methods. Otherwise he becomes a slave. He is tossed about hither and thither helplessly by various currents. Various hostile forces drag him in different corners. He drifts like a wooden plank in a river. He is always very miserable and unhappy although he is wealthy and possesses everything that the world can offer.

The captain of a steamer who has a mariner's compass, who has knowledge of the sea, the routes and the oceanic currents can sail smoothly. Otherwise his steamer will drift here and there helplessly and be wrecked by being dashed against some icebergs or rocks. Likewise, a wise sailor in the ocean of this life, who has a detailed knowledge of the laws of karma and nature can sail smoothly and reach the goal of life positively. Understanding the laws of nature, you can mould or shape your character in any way you like. "As a man thinketh so he becometh", is one of the great laws of nature. Think you are pure; pure you will become. Think you are noble; noble you will become. Think you are a human being; human you will become. Think you are Brahman; Brahman you will become.

He who spreads happiness will always get such favourable circumstances as can bring him happiness.He who spreads pain to others will, doubtless, get such unfavourable circumstances, according to the law of nature, as can bring him misery and pain. Therefore man creates his own character and circumstances. Bad character can be transmuted into good character by means of good thoughts, and unfavourable circumstances can be changed into favourable circumstances by doing good actions. O Ram! You must understand the laws of nature and become wise and happy.

30 MARCH - NATURE'S LAWS

The law of compensation operates everywhere in nature's phenomena. The seed breaks and a large tree arises from the seed. There is no loss in the breaking of the seed. Fuel burns. Fuel is destroyed. But there is heat, in accordance with the law of compensation. Many articles are cooked in the fire on account of the heat.

The law of compensation operates in the mental plane also. It keeps up the balance and establishes peace, concord, equilibrium, harmony and justice in nature. Think deeply, cogitate and reflect. You will see that this law of compensation is operating everywhere in the phenomena of nature. It is inexorable and immutable. No on can defy this relentless and irresistible law. If you do an evil act, you will reap a bad fruit in compensation.

If you take an individual life as an isolated event which begins with birth of the physical body and terminates with its death you cannot find any correct explanation or solution for the affairs of life. You will be groping in darkness and despair. Your present life is nothing, when compared with the whole soul-life. It is momentary - a mere fragment. If you want to find the cause or antecedent for anything, you will have to go deep into the affairs of the eternal soul-life. Then alone there will be perfect balance of cause and effect, antecedent and consequence. Life does not end with the disintegration of this physical body alone. There is reincarnation. There had been countless previous lives also. You will have to take into consideration the widest view of the life of the soul. Then you will find a perfect, satisfactory solution for all the intricate and complicated affairs of life.

Every wrong action or crime brings its own punishment in accordance with the law of retribution. The law of causation, the law of action and reaction, the law of compensation and the law of retribution - all operate together. He who hurts another man, hurts himself first. Remember that God is neither partial nor unjust.

Remember that God is not responsible for the wealth of one man or the poverty of another. You suffer on account of your own wicked actions. There is nothing chaotic or capricious in this world. Things do not happen in this universe by accident or chance in a disorderly manner. They happen in regular succession and events follow each other in a regular order. There is a kind of definite connection between what is being done now by you and what will happen in the future. Sow always the seeds which will bring pleasant fruits and which will make you happy herein and hereafter.

31 MARCH - THREEFOLD KARMA

Man is threefold in his nature. He consists of desire or feeling, knowing and willing. These three fashion his karma. He knows objects like chair, tree, etc. He feels joy and sorrow. He wills - to do this, or not to do that.

Behind the action, there are desire and thought. A desire for an object arises in the mind and then you think of ways and means to obtain it. Then you exert to possess it. Desire, thought and action always go together in this process. They are the three threads, as it were, that are twisted into the cord of karma.

Desire produces karma. You work and exert to acquire the objects of your desire. Karma produces its fruits as pain or pleasure. You will have to take birth after birth to reap the fruits of your karmas. This is the law of karma.

Karma is of three kinds, namely, the accumulated works, the works that fructify and the current works. The accumulated karmas have accrued to you from the past. Part of it is seen in the character of man, in his tendencies and aptitudes, capacities, inclinations and desires.

The fructifying karma is that portion of the past karma which is responsible for the present body. It is ripe for reaping and cannot be avoided or changed. It is only exhausted by being experienced. You pay past debts.

The karma of current works is that karma which is now being made for the future.

In Vedantic literature, there is a beautiful analogy. The archer has already released an arrow; it has left his hands. He cannot recall it. He is about to shoot another arrow. The bundle of arrows in the quiver on his back is the accumulated work. The arrow he has shot is fructifying work, and the arrow which he is about to shoot from his bow is current work. Of these, he has perfect control over the accumulated and the current works, but he must surely work out his fructifying works. The past which has begun to take effect he has to experience. Fructifying karma cannot be prevented even by the Lord.

1 APRIL - MEANING OF KARMA

Karma is a sanskrit term that signifies action or deed. Any physical or mental action is karma. Thinking is mental karma. Karma is the sum total of our acts, both in the present life and in the preceding births.

Karma means not only action, but also the result of an action. The consequence of an action is really not a separate thing. It is a part of the action and cannot be divided from it. The law of karma means the law of causation. Wherever there is a cause, there an effect must be produced. A seed is a cause for the tree, which is the effect. The tree produces seeds and becomes the cause for the seeds. The cause is found in the effect and the effect is found in the cause. The effect is similar to the cause. This is the universal chain of cause and effect which has no end.

No link in the chain is unnecessary. This world runs on this fundamental and vital law. This law is inexorable and immutable. This grand law operates everywhere in the physical and mental planes. No phenomenon can escape from the operation of this mighty law and all other laws of nature are subordinate to this fundamental law.

No event can occur without having a positive, definite cause at the back of it. The breaking out of a war, the rise of a comet, the occurrence of an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, the outbreak of an epidemic, thunder, lightning, floods, diseases of the body, fortune, misfortune, all have their definite causes behind them.

The grand law of causation includes the law of action and reaction, the law of compensation and the law of retribution. All these laws come under one general, all embracing heading, namely, the doctrine of karma.

If there is an action, there must be a reaction. The reaction will be of equal force and of similar nature. Every thought, desire, imagination and sentiment causes reaction. Virtue brings its own reward; vice brings its own punishment. This is the working of the law of reaction. God neither punishes the wicked nor rewards the virtuous. It is their own karmas that bring reward and punishment. It is the law of action and reaction that brings the fruits. No one is blamed.

The law operates everywhere with unceasing precision and scientific accuracy. The law of action and reaction operates both in the physical and mental planes.

2 APRIL - PRACTISE KARMA YOGA

The practice of karma yoga does not demand that you possess enormous wealth. You can serve with your mind and body. If you find a poor sick man lying on the roadside, give him some water or milk to drink. Cheer him up with sweet encouraging words. Take him to the nearest hospital. If you do service like this, your heart will be purified.

If anyone is suffering from pain in any part of the body, at once shampoo the part. When you massage him feel that you are shampooing the body of the Lord. As you do this, repeat your mantra, or any other name of the Lord. Also pray from the bottom of your heart: "O Lord! Remove the pain of this man. Let him rest in peace. Let him possess good health."

When you massage any person feel that it is the energy from the cosmic source that is flowing continuously through your hands. Some neophytes are afraid that their energy will be depleted by massaging another person. This is a serious mistake. The more you give, the more you will get. You will be in tune with the cosmic energy. This is the divine law.

If you see a man or an animal with severe bleeding, on the road or anywhere, do not run hither and thither to find cloth to bandage them. At once tear a piece of cloth from your shirt and use that for bandaging. This is real karma yoga. This is a test to gauge your heart. How many of you have done such noble service? If you have not done it up till now - then do it from today.

God is more pleased with such service of the poor and the helpless, than with service done by rich people with pomp and vanity.

"Do as you would be done by" - remember this motto always. You will not do any wrong action. You will feel unbounded joy.

Never lose the opportunity to serve. Serve to the satisfaction of the person you are serving. It is not enough to serve him just to please yourself. Only by selfless service can you attain God-realisation.

If selflessness becomes the religion of the world, there will be heaven on earth. When work is done as worship of the Lord, it is transformed from karma into yoga. Cultivate cosmic love. Rekindle the light of love in the world.

3 APRIL - THE PRESENT IS SUPREME

In order to attain success in yoga, sadhana (spiritual practice) is necessary. Have no patience with theoretical religion. By contemplating in a closed room for years, you may not advance more than a few steps. The effects of past actions can only be washed away by the fresh, virtuous actions in the present - that is, by service. There is no other way of purifying yourself. There is no other method of destroying impure impressions, and desires.

No one can achieve the ideals of karma yoga without destroying the ego. And the ego, the accumulated layers of egoism cannot be destroyed without the magic solvency of service. If one wishes to know, one must give and one must serve. To the self centred, knowledge will ever be meaningless and empty.

God has no use for the so-called pandit who mechanically chants the scriptures, but who shuts his eyes to the sick man on the wayside. The self, the smaller self, of rajas (dynamism) and tamas (inertia), is always prompting one for one's own aggrandisement. It wishes to enjoy, it wishes to have bhoga (pleasure). But the bhoga of the three worlds cannot give a tenth, a hundredth, of the bliss of divine knowledge.

Karma yoga is very difficult in the beginning due to the ego-ridden impure mind. You have to be strict and firm with the mind. Do not listen to its selfish promptings. Draw inspiration and courage from communion with the Lord in the silent hours of prayer, and from studying the lives of saints and from the sacred scriptures. Do not think too much about this method of niskamya yoga (the yoga of selfless service). Just begin somewhere. Work with the right intention, the right spirit. The way will open before you.

Do charity. Serve the sick. Serve the poor. Serve the country. Serve your parents. Serve any social or spiritual institution. Spiritualise all of your actions. Then every action becomes an offering unto the Lord, when it is performed in the right spirit.

Karma yoga is a great leveller. It removes all illusory distinctions and differences. It leads to unity and to a feeling of oneness. It removes idleness and inertia. It gives you good health. Plunge yourself in the practice of karma yoga, the yoga of selfless service. Glory to karma yoga which elevates a man to divinity and unity.

4 APRIL - GRADUAL PROGRESS

The mind is so framed that it cannot work without expectation of fruits or anticipation of rewards for actions. If you smile when you meet your friend, you expect a smile in return. If you give a glass of water to somebody, you expect something in return. If you salute a friend, you expect him to salute you in return. This is the inborn nature of a worldly-minded man.

Train the mind to work disinterestedly. Discipline the mind with patience and perseverance. Worldly-minded people cannot understand the spirit of niskamya seva (unselfish, motiveless service) as their minds are charged with or even saturated with impurities. In the beginning all your actions may be selfish. But if you work hard in the field of karma yoga for two years then five actions out of a hundred will be unselfish and ninety-five will be selfish. Scrutinise your motives. Purify them. Struggle hard.

After some years of incessant struggle, fifty actions out of a hundred will be unselfish. A good time will come and all your actions will be unselfish and pure. The time is not very far to reach the ideal if you keep the ideal in front of you daily, and if you struggle hard and are sincere and earnest in your purpose.

Every work is worship of the Lord. In the light of karma yoga all actions are sacred. The aspirant who always takes delight in doing work which is considered by worldly man as 'menial services', and who always does such acts willingly, he and only he will become a dynamic yogi. Only he is completely free from conceit and egoism. Only he will have no downfall. The canker of pride cannot touch him.

The world is nothing but manifestation of God. Service of humanity is service of God. Service is worship. People are impatient, they expect to get siddhis (psychic powers) after doing a little service. But the real karma yogi, who serves people with humility and who sees God in every face, is honoured and respected by all.

5 APRIL - SELFLESS ACTION

Karma yoga removes the impurities of the mind and prepares it for the reception of divine light, divine grace and divine knowledge. Service of humanity is service of God. Work always elevates when it is done in the right spirit, without attachment and egoism.

Karma yoga expands the heart, breaks all the barriers that stand in the way of realising the ultimate unity and takes you to the door of intuition. It helps you to develop divine virtues such as mercy, tolerance, kindness, cosmic love, patience, self-restraint, etc. It destroys jealousy, hatred, malice and the idea of superiority. Karma yoga is the yoga of selfless action, without the idea of agency and without expectation of fruits. Work is worship of the Lord. There is indescribable joy in the practice of karma yoga.

A karma yogi should be absolutely free from greed, lust, anger and egoism. Only then can he do real and useful service. A karma yogi should have an amiable, loving nature. He should have perfect adaptability, tolerance, sympathy, cosmic love and mercy. He should be able to adjust himself to the ways and habits of others.

A karma yogi should have an all-embracing and all-inclusive heart. He should have equal-vision. He should have a cool and balanced mind. He should rejoice in the welfare of others. He should have all his senses under control. He should lead a very simple life.

A karma yogi should bear insult, disrespect, dishonour, censure, infamy, disgrace, harsh words, heat and cold and the pains of disease. He should have great power of endurance. He should have absolute faith in himself, in God, in the scriptures and In the words of his guru. Such a man is a good karma yogi and reaches the goal quickly.

The man who serves the world, really serves himself. This is an important point. When you serve a man, when you serve your country, always think that the Lord has given you a rare opportunity to improve. Correct and mould yourself by service. Be grateful to that man who has given you a chance to serve him.

6 APRIL - BE FREE IN ACTION

Every thought and every deed of yours will generate certain tendencies which will affect your life here and hereafter. If you do good actions with a selfless spirit, you will soar high into the regions of bliss and peace. As you sow so shall you reap.

Good actions generate good thoughts. Wrong actions bring pain, misery and unhappiness. Everyone of us is governed by the law of action and reaction. Your present personality is the total result of your previous actions and thoughts. Your future depends upon your present action. Man moulds his own destiny.

Actions by themselves do not bind a person. It is the attachment and identification in regard to the work that binds us and brings pain and misery. It is the motive that binds you. It is the motive that liberates you.

Work, but work with detachment. In every act kindle the light of divine love. Always remember your essential divine nature and act in the world in a spirit of divine dedication. This world is ruled by the Lord's eternal laws. In the east, the great law of cause and effect is called karma. In the New Testament the same truth is expressed in the words: "Whatever a man sows, that will he also reap". (Gal. 6 - 7).

Actions produce samskara (mental impressions) that coalesce and form tendencies. Tendencies develop into habits and character. Evil deeds generate bad character. Actions, without the idea of agency, without expectation of fruits, without attachment to the action, and being balanced in success and failure, will not bind you. Selfless actions purify your heart and lead to the attainment of wisdom of the self.

Karma yoga is skill in action. It is a great art. You have to take as much interest in each act that you perform daily, as an artist takes in his dearly loved paintings. Note how, after keen deliberation, the artist puts the brush - his entire mind is centred on the work in hand - his entire being is focussed on the painting - he works self-forgetfully. This should be your attitude. Take this interest in all that you do and at the same time be detached from all your actions. Then you will not be bound to samsara (the wheel of birth and death).

7 APRIL - SERVE SILENTLY

Work for the commonweal; do not work for selfish gains. Give up all profit motives. Work with detachment and you will attain eternal peace and immortality. The wise man does actions but believes himself to be free from actions since he expects no returns there from and has no selfish motive thereto.

Serve without being conspicuous. Serve silently without any advertisement. Without belief in God, without belief in an ordered world you cannot live amicably; you cannot work for the community.

Do what is right and leave the results to look after themselves. Do your duty with more and more confidence in the Lord. Become a lover of humanity. Foster kinship with all humanity.

Feel that the one Lord dwells in all. Feel that it is he who gives you an opportunity to serve him through all suffering mankind. The world is more and more in need of karma yogis.

Humanity is your God and service to humanity is your worship. Self-control is a natural corollary to the spirit of love and service. He who works with his mind detached and free from selfish longings is a real sanyasin.

The spirit of selflessness is the key to success in the yoga of action. Service becomes karma yoga to the extent one practises self-control and self-denial. With all actions done without expectation of reward, you will gradually become satvic (pure). For one who has faith in God, karma yoga becomes easy and purification of the heart is quickly achieved.

Knowledge of atman (self) dawns in that pure mind which is purified by selfless service and devotion to the Lord. When the yogi feels he gets all his power from the Lord - then the 'doership' ego will go.

Selfless service must be based on sadhana (spiritual practice). You must be regular in your prayers, your meditation, in the repetition of the Lord's name, in enquiry and self-analysis. All these are the inner springs of the right spiritual bhava (attitude), which is essential to karma yoga.

8 APRIL - BENEFITS OF KARMA YOGA

Karma yoga prepares the mind for the reception of the light of knowledge. It expands the heart and breaks all barriers that stand in the way of unity or oneness. karma yoga is the effective method or sadhana for chitta suddhi (purification of the mind).

When the thought of doing good to others becomes a part and parcel of man's life, of his very being, then he will not entertain the least selfish motive. He will take immense delight in serving others and in doing good to others.

There is a peculiar joy and bliss in vigorous selfless service. You get inner spiritual strength and power by performing motiveless and selfless service.

You will develop humility, pure love, sympathy, tolerance and mercy. The sense of separateness will be annihilated. Selfishness will be eradicated. You will get a broad and liberal outlook on life, You will begin to feel oneness and unity. Eventually you will attain knowledge of the self.

If you really want to grow in the spiritual path, you must do all sorts of service daily, till the end of your life. Then only you are safe. Do not stop serving when you become a famous yogi. The spirit of service must enter every nerve, cell, tissue and bone of your body. Then you will become a real, full-blown practical vedantin.

This is a prayer for karma yogis by Sri Sankaracharya: "Thou art atman, buddhi is thy consort Parvati; the prana is thy attendant; this body is thy house; the act of sensual enjoyment is thy worship; deep sleep is samadhi; walking by my feet is the prambulation around thee; all my speeches are thy praise; whatever actions I perform, are all thy worship, O Lord Siva".

9 APRIL - MIND TO GOD

Give the mind to God and then you will be liberated. You will be free from birth and death. You will get the highest bliss. There is no doubt of this. Worship God in the poor and the sick. Service of the poor and sick is worship of God. Destroy ghrna (disgust and loathing) when you serve the sick. Then you will get chitta suddhi (purity of the mind) quickly. Service of the poor and the sick is a powerful remedy to bring about the purification of the mind.

When you meet a real, sincere karma yogi, who is plodding in the line for six or seven years, you can at once feel his purity, his selflessness, his inner joy, his inner peace, his inner strength, his inner spiritual growth. You can feel his nearness to God. You can see occasional flashes or glimpses of divine light during satvic moments. He has a pleasant feeling of having justified the divine command in the grand plan or scheme of things.

People do not want to remove mala (impurity) by selfless service. They do not want to remove vikshepa (mental distraction) by upasana (worshipful contemplation). They think that service and bhakti are nothing. They at once jump to open the kundalini (the inner spiritual power) and raise the brahmakara vritti (the notion that only Brahman is real). They will only break their own legs. Rather serve and worship. Jnana and yoga will come by themselves. Kundalini will be awakened by itself.

In the neophytes, in the path of karma yoga, the idea of being a separate worker, the idea of agency, may be strong. You feel that you are doing all the works. However, in course of time, when the heart becomes purer and purer, you will actually feel that some higher power, God, is working through you. You will feel that your body and mind are only instruments in his hands.

"When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth". St. Matt. VI - 3. Begging without any selfish motive, is not begging at all. It is pure yoga. It is for spiritual upliftment only. Remember – you cannot deny pain, you cannot wipe away all the pain in the world - but you can rise above pain by recognising your self.

10 APRIL - SERVE WITH YOUR WHOLE MIND

Half-hearted service is no service at all. Give your whole heart, mind and soul when you serve. This is very important when you practise karma yoga.

Some people have their body in one place, mind in another place, and soul in another place. That is the reason why they do not make any substantial progress in the path.

Forget not the goal of life amidst selfish activities. The goal of life is self realisation. Are you attempting to reach the end and aim in life? Are you doing japa (repetition of a name of God)? Are you doing pranayama (yoga breathing)? Are you doing meditation? Have you kept the ideal before your mind's eye? That day in which you do not do any spiritual sadhana (practice) is wasted. Give the mind to God and the hands to work.

You will have to analyse and scrutinise your motives. It is the selfish motive and not the work itself that binds a man to samsmara (world-cycle). Prepare the mind for karma yoga. Selfish work cannot be taken as karma yoga.

Life is very precious. Live in the spirit of the Gita's teaching. Work without expectation of fruits, and egoism. Think you are nimitta (instrument) in the hands of the Lord. If you work with this mental attitude you will soon become a yogi.

Work never degrades a man. Unselfish work is worship. All work is sacred. There is the story of the famous butcher-sadhaka (seeker) of the Mahabharata. He realised God in his butcher's shop - through serving his parents.

Inside, you have got all the materials for wisdom. There is a vast magazine of power and knowledge within you. It wants kindling. Now wake up!

When you work disinterestedly, without any thought of agency, and when you surrender the works and their fruits as ishvararpanam (offering to God), all karmas are transformed into yogic kriya (practice). Walking, eating, sleeping, answering the calls of nature, talking, etc., all become offerings unto the Lord.

11 APRIL - SPIRIT OF DETACHMENT

Worldly people are generally elated by success and depressed by failure. Elation and depression are the attributes of the mind. If you want to become a real karma yogi in the right sense of the term, you will have to keep a balanced mind at all times, in all conditions and under all circumstances. This is no doubt very difficult. But you will have to do it anyhow. Then only will you have peace of mind and real lasting happiness. He who keeps a balanced mind is a jnani. Karma yoga prepares the mind for the attainment of jnana. That is the beauty of karma yoga. That is the secret and essence of karma yoga.

There must not be the least attachment to any kind of work. You must be ready to leave any work at any time. There may be a divine call upon you for certain work. You will have to take it up at once without grumbling, whatever the nature of the work may be, whether you are willing or not. You will have to stop it also, if conditions and circumstances demand you to do so. This is yoga. There is no attachment to the work here.

Keep the reason rooted in the self. Have a poised mind amidst the changes of the world. Work for the fulfilment of purposes divine. Do not expect any fruit. Do everything as ishvararpana (offering to God). Work in unison with the divine will for the welfare of the world. Allow the divine energy to work unhampered through you. The moment your egoism comes in, there will be immediate blocking of the free flow of the divine energy. Make your indriya (senses) perfect instruments for his lila (work, play). Keep the. body-flute hollow by emptying it of your egoism. Then the flute-bearer of Brindavan (Krishna) will play freely through this body-flute. He will work through you. Then you will feel the lightness of the work. You will feel that God works through you. You will be washed of all the responsibilities. You will be as free as a bird. You will feel that you are quite a changed being. Your egoism will try to re-enter. Be careful. Be on the alert. By gradual practice and purification of the mind you will become an expert in karma yoga. All your actions will be perfect and selfless. All actions will eventually culminate in jnana. This is the yoga of equanimity.

12 APRIL - ALL WORK IS YOGA

Every bit of work is yoga for you when you are sincere. Think that the Lord is working through your hands, eating through your mouth. In the beginning some of your actions may be unselfish. But in the long run you can do all actions in an unselfish manner.

Always scrutinise your motives. Every act can be spiritualised when the motive is pure. Work is meditation. Serve everyone with intense love, without the idea of agency, without expectation of reward or fruits.

It is selfishness that has deplorably contracted your heart. Selfishness is the bane of society. Selfishness clouds understanding. Selfishness is petty-mindedness. Pursuit of pleasure increases selfishness. Selfishness is the root cause for human sufferings. Real spiritual progress starts from selfless service. Serve the sadhus and sanyasins (holy ones), the bhaktas (devotees) and the poor and sick. Serve them with bhava, prem and bhakti (inner feeling, love and devotion).

The spirit of service must enter deeply into your very nerves and tissues. The reward is invaluable. Practise and feel the cosmic expansion and infinite ananda (bliss). Tall talk and idle gossip will not do, dear friends. Evince intense zeal and enthusiasm in work. Be fiery in the spirit of service!

Have nistha (firm devotion) with God and cestha (activity) with hands. You will be able to do both these simultaneously. by practice. The manual work will become automatic, or intuitive. You will have two minds. One portion will be at work and three quarters of the mind will be in the service of the Lord - in kirtan, in meditation, in japa.

A raw, untrained aspirant feels, "My preceptor is treating me like a servant. He is using me for petty jobs." He who has understood the right significance of karma yoga will take every work as yogic activity or worship of the Lord. In his vision there is no menial work. In the light of karma yoga all work is sacred.

Is there a greater karma yogi than Lord Buddha? He still lives in our hearts because of the spirit of service ingrained in him. He spent his whole life serving others.

13 APRIL - DYNAMIC PEACE

Lord Krishna expects us to cultivate dynamic peace. He does not want us to be idle for even a single second. He characterises his 'dear ones' as those who are engaged in working for the commonweal. Such activity is known as the practice of yajna, dana and tapas - sacrifice, charity and self-control.

Man should practise self-control. Man should practise charity - he should give, give, give. He should give whatever he has. And he should transform all his daily activities into one continuous sacrifice. He should feel that he, Brahman, is offering the various actions into the infinite Brahman. He should perform all actions in a perfectly unattached manner.

Do your duty but inwardly feel that you are only an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Feel that your true Self, the godhead within you, is the eternal witness That is why Lord Krishna described yoga as karma-kushlam (skill in action). Karma yoga is an art in itself.

The secret of karma yoga is to combine deep interest with perfect detachment. If work is performed for work's sake, if such work is performed for the sake of the commonweal, in a spirit of sacrifice - then you will enjoy an ineffable peace, a bliss that surpasseth all understanding, all description. The gates of the kingdom of God will be thrown open to you. That is what the Lord assures us in the Bhagavad Gita.

Selfless actions are not soulless actions. Put your heart and soul into all that you do. Live in the Lord and realise that you are an instrument of his will. Whatever is done without this realisation is an act performed in ignorance, is an act that would bind you faster to the wheel of samsara (cycle of birth and death).

Three things are necessary when you practise karma yoga. You must be free from egoism; you must not expect any appreciation for the work that you do; and you must have a balanced state of mind in success and failure.

14 APRIL - SPIRIT OF SERVICE

The right spirit in service is necessary. Not the smallest insect is to be treated callously. I once found a drowning wasp. I took it out, gave it some warmth and prayed for it. For I know that the Lord is there in that wasp. So work for the benefit of others, because they are divinities, not because you want personal glory.

Even a tiny bit of service in this spirit will be recognised at once – while thousands of pounds, given with a view to self-advertisement, may earn you little merit.

The secret of nishkamya karma (unselfish, motiveless action) was explained I by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. Every selfless worker should study the Gita daily. He can obtain real wisdom from it. The Gita is alive to those who are alive to it. The Gita is a scripture for all time. It is especially addressed to the people of the present age.

Fill your mind with the thought of God. Be devoted to God. Do everything as God's will. Surrender yourself to him. This is, in short, the secret of karma yoga. This is the yoga of synthesis. This is the yoga most suited to the kali yuga. It helps the development of the human personality. It leaves no loop-holes for maya or ignorance to enter you. It fills every part of man with godliness.

The karma yogi should ceaselessly strive to cultivate divine virtues and to purify his heart. He should have peacefulness and mental equilibrium as his constant companions. Only that person who has found peace within himself and who is able to maintain a balanced state of mind in all circumstances, will be able to radiate peace and joy and even-mindedness.

This peace is not inert or tamasic. This surrender is not fatalism. Cultivate dynamic peace. Do not be idle for a single second. He who is working for the commonweal is dear to the Lord. He is a sage. He is a great bhakta. He is a great karma yogi.

15 APRIL - ADAPT AND ADJUST

A karma yogi should adapt, adjust, accommodate, in relation to all and under all circumstances. He should share what he has with others. He should be absolutely unselfish. He should keep his senses under control. He should always be truthful and cheerful. He should be social and amiable. He should be simple, noble, humble and gentle.

A karma yogi should bear insult and injury. He should observe brahmacharya. Offer all actions and their fruits - body, mind, senses and soul -as flowers at the lotus feet of the Lord.

A karma yogi should feel that the world is a manifestation of God and that he is serving God in all beings. He should discipline the mind and the senses and body. He should develop alertness, decision, discrimination, discernment, forgiveness, patience, mercy, cosmic love, tolerance and equal-vision.

A karma yogi should have a balanced mind. He should be calm, cool and serene always. He should combine bhakti or jnana yoga with karma yoga. He should be good and do good. He should keep the body strong and healthy - practicing asanas, pranayama, running and physical culture. He should keep a spiritual diary and stick to all his resolves.

Put your heart and soul in all that you do. Remember always that you are serving the Lord himself; through all your actions you are expressing his will. You should act like a dutiful manager of the absentee landlord's estate. Have the same attitude towards your worldly concerns that a loving and conscientious nurse has towards the children entrusted in her care.

Do your duty well, inwardly feel that you are only an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Feel that your true self, the Godhead within you, is the eternal sakshi (witness). Live in the Lord. Repeat his name always. Feel that God does everything. Share all you have - your heart will be purified quickly. Knowledge of the self will descend on you quickly. You will see God in all.

16 APRIL - YOU HAVE FREEWILL

Some ignorant people say: "Karma does everything. It is all destiny. If I am destined by my karma to be like this or like that, why then should I exert? It is my destiny only." This is fatalism. This will bring inertia. stagnation and misery, This is perfect misunderstanding of the laws of karma. This is a fallacious argument. An intelligent man will certainly not put such a question. You have made your own destiny from within by your thoughts and actions. You have a free will to choose now. You have freedom in action. A rogue is not an eternal rogue. Put him in the company of a saint. He will change in no time. He will think and act now in a different way and will change his destiny. He will become saintly in character. Dacoit Ratnagar was changed into Sage Valmiki by the current of Rishi Narada. Jagai and Madai, two rogues of the first order were changed by the current of Nityananda, disciple of Lord Gouranga. You will have to desire, to think, and act. You can change karma in any way you like. You can become a yogi or jnani by right desire, by right thinking and by right action. You can attain the position of Indra or Brahma by good karma. Man is not a helpless being. He has free will of his own.

Man has power to choose between the alternatives which fate brings before him. In choosing between them he may either follow his tendencies produced by his past actions or struggle against them. The will of man is ever free. The arguments which are advanced by determinists in saying that human will is determined are not sound and tenable; they fall to the ground.

Dear friends! Man is the master of his destiny. Wake up now from the deep slumber of ignorance. Never become a fatalist. Think rightly, Act rightly. Lead a virtuous life. Never hurt the feelings of others. Mould your character. Purify your mind. Concentrate. Thou art nitya mukta purusha (ever free spirit). Tat Twam Asi Thou art That.

The samskaras (habit-patterns) of virtuous actions are imbedded in the chitta. They are also indestructible. They are real, valuable assets for you. They will prevent you from doing wrong actions. They will push you on to the goal. Selfless works will prepare the ground of antahkarana (the psyche) for the reception of the seed of jnana. The path of karma yoga eventually leads to the attainment of infinite bliss of the self.

17 APRIL - FREEDOM IN ACTION

Actions which are of a binding nature lose that nature when you do them with equanimity or evenness of mind through the help of pure reason, which has lost all attachment to sensual objects and which is resting in the self. You will have to cultivate and develop this pure reason and equanimity of mind.

God has given this marvellous machine to man for service of humanity and thereby attaining an immortal life. If he uses this body for satisfaction of petty desires and selfish ends, he becomes an object of pity and condemnation. He is caught up in the wheel of birth and death. Rest the mind in the self or God when you perform any action. He who has developed pure poised reason and who is resting in the self, is quite aware that all actions are done by the divine actor within (antaryamin). He is perfectly conscious that God really operates in this body-machine and moves this machine.

This yogi of equanimity or evenness of mind now understands fully the fundamental principles that govern all bodily actions. He performs all actions for God's sake in fulfilment of his purpose without desire for fruit and eventually attains the everlasting peace.

Merit and demerit (punya and papa) do not affect the karma yogi who has evenness or equanimity of mind, for he exults not over the good fruit of the one nor worries over the bad fruit of the other. He has equanimity of mind in success and failure. His mind is always resting in God all the while. Works which are of a binding nature lose that character when performed with a balanced mind. The karma yogi has no attachment to sensual objects. He has purified his mind by constant selfless service. He has given up all idea of agency. He treats the body as an instrument of God, given to him for the fulfilment of his purpose. He attributes all activities to the divine actor within. He who is established in the yoga of equanimity becomes an expert in the science of karma yoga.

18 APRIL - ANASHAKTI YOGA

Ashakti is attachment. Man gets attached to the objects of the world and is bound thereby. He takes birth after birth and is caught in the wheel of birth and death. Attachment is death. Non-attachment is eternal life.

Anashakti is non-attachment. Ashakti is destroyed by vairagya (dispassion) and viveka (discrimination between the real and the unreal). Look at these - birth, death, old age, disease, impermanence, pain, sorrow, misery, worries, anxieties, fears, etc. Thus you will develop non-attachment,

If you abandon attachment to the fruits of your actions, if you are ever content, if you consecrate the fruits of your actions and the actions themselves to the Lord, you will attain emancipation. Actions will not bind you because you are not doing anything, although you go through the motions of doing something. This is anashakti yoga.

Do not hope for anything. Control the mind and the senses. Give up greed and desire. Free yourself from the pairs of opposites. Be balanced in success and failure. Destroy envy. Though you perform actions you are not bound. Destroy attachment. Be harmonious.

Fix the mind on the innermost atman - now you will not be bound. You will attain salvation. Practise this yoga. You will purify your heart and attain the goal of life.

Selfless work is yoga. Work is atma-puja (worship of the self). There is no loss in service. Work is transmuted into jnana (wisdom). See the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter IV Verse 33. "Sarva karmakhalam partha jnane pari samapyate" - all actions, in their entirety, O Partha, culminate in wisdom.

Service of the sick is service of the Lord. There is no yoga greater than relieving human suffering. If you serve a sick man for half an hour, it is tantamount to meditating for three hours, or doing japa of Om 21,600 times. Do not think that in service there is loss.

Karma yoga is only a means to an end. It removes the impurities of the mind. As soon as purification is effected, you will have to take refuge in vedanta, the path of jnana (self-knowledge).

19 APRIL - ACTION IN ACTION

All actions are done by the gunas (qualities of nature) only. He whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks: "I am the doer". This is the cause of bondage. The ignorant man identifies the self through the force of avidya (ignorance) with his body, mind and senses which are the products or effects of the three gunas - satva (purity), rajas (activity) and tamas (inertia). Now comes the trouble. If he thinks: "I am the doer", he has to enjoy the good and bad fruits of his actions. He is brought again and again to this mortal plane.

He who sees that prakrti (nature) performs all actions and that the self is actionless, really sees. The wise man who knows the essence of the divisions of the qualities and functions, holding that "the qualities move amidst the qualities" is not attached. He separates himself from the body, mind and organs, He stands as their witness and as a witness of their functions by identifying himself with the pure inner self. He says: "Seeing, hearing, touching, speaking, giving, grasping, opening and closing the eyes, are functions of the senses. I have nothing to do. They are the dharmas (proper functions) of the senses. I am distinct from the senses, The senses move among the senses. I am nirlipta (untainted). I am asanga (unattached). "This is the drsti (vision) or niscaya (determination) of a jnani. He escapes from the bondage of karma. He is freed from the wheel of birth and death.

If you identify yourself with Brahman and stand as a witness of the activities of prakrti and its effects, mind, senses and body, you will realise "inaction in action". Brahman is niskriya, akarta, niravayava (actionless), (non-doer), (without limbs). But he is the primum mobile. He gives a push and prakrti moves and acts . He gazes and prakrti moves and acts. Without his presence prakrti cannot do anything. Therefore it is Brahman only who really does all actions. This is "action in inaction" as taught in the Gita.

20 APRIL - LET GOD DO EVERYTHING

When the sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) has combined bhakti yoga and karma yoga, he feels that God does everything, that he is an instrument in the hands of God. Thus he slowly frees himself from the bonds of karma and attains freedom through action.

When the sadhaka combines jnana yoga with karma yoga he feels that prakrti (nature) does everything. He feels that he is the silent witness of the activities of the mind, the senses and the three states (waking, dream and deep sleep).

The karma yogi feels the indwelling presence everywhere. He develops adaptability, He shares all he has (physical, mental and spiritual) with others. He observes strict brahmacharya. He offers all his works unto the Lord. Before going to sleep he says: "O Lord, whatever I have done today, is done as worship of thee. May thou be pleased to accept it." Thus he burns the fruits of action, and he is no longer bound.

The karma yogi attains freedom through action. Thus he gets purity of heart and, through purity of heart, he attains knowledge of the self.

Some aspirants are humble at the beginning of their career. But, when they get name, fame, some followers, some disciples, they become victims of pride. Now they cannot do any service, they cannot carry anything on their heads or even in their hands.

The yogi that carries the baggage with joy and feeling, amidst a multitude of admirers, without making any show of humility, must be admired.

"Restraining and subduing the senses, regarding everything equally, rejoicing in the welfare of all, these alone come to Me." (Bhagavad Gita Chapter XII. Verse 4). Such a man becomes a good karma yogi. He reaches the goal quickly.

21 APRIL - WITNESS CONSCIOUSNESS

The student of vedanta (the path of pure wisdom) develops sakshi bhav (witness consciousness) through discrimination and self-analysis. The devotee develops nimitta bhava (the attitude "I am an instrument in the hands of God") and surrenders everything at the lotus-feet of the Lord. Thus they attain a mental attitude of non-attachment to actions and their fruits.

This is the attitude of a karma yogi:

- "God alone is. God alone acts. Not even a piece of straw moves without his will."
- "He is the doer. He alone is the enjoyer. I am but an instrument in his hands."
- "He is the power that resides in the senses and the mind; the power of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling - all these belong to him."
- "He utilises my mind and senses and works out his will. "
- "My body, mind and senses belong to him alone."
- "All actions are done by the qualities of nature only. It is nature (prakrti) that acts. It is prakrti that works."
- "I am the pure atman, the eternal self. I am asanga, akarta, abhokta (unattached, non-doer, non-experiencer). I am the silent witness."
- "I am distinct from the mind and the senses. I am the eternally pure, perfect, immortal atman."

While serving others, the vedantin (the student of vedanta) should visualise his self in others and the bhakta should see the Lord in other faces.

Understand these bhavas (attitudes) fully. Meditate on them daily. Act accordingly, without attachment to or identification with the work, You will soon attain God-realisation. This is jnana - this is the jnana-agni (fire of wisdom) which burns the fruits of all actions and liberates you from bondage.

In the practice of karma yoga, there is no loss of effort. There is no harm. There is no transgression also. Even a little practice can protect you from great fear of birth and death with its concomitant evils. You will doubtless reap the fruit of jnana (self knowledge) in this path of karma yoga. There is no uncertainty here. Matter is indestructible. Energy is indestructible. Even a little practice with the right mental attitude will purify the chitta (heart and mind).

22 APRIL - OBSTACLES AND REMEDY

Be wise. Discriminate. Analyse. Scrutinise your thoughts daily. Boldly proclaim: "I would devote my entire life to the service of others – no matter whether I achieve salvation or not. Salvation is not my concern. My duty is to serve the Lord in all; to serve the sick and the poor, untiringly; to saturate my entire being in the service of others." This should be your bold proclamation at all times - to everyone with whom you come into contact.

Even while you work you should feel: "I am not hungry, it is the function of the prana to feel hungry. I do not see anything, it is the function of the eye to see. Exhilaration and depression belong to the mind, not to me. I am the witness (sakshi) of everything." Through such regular vichara (ratiocination), you will soon attain samadhi (self-awareness).

A karma yogi must be a hero. He will come across many difficulties and obstacles - he must conquer them one by one. He must do this with an undaunted spirit, He must do it boldly.

There are five obstacles that a man has to face when he does karma yoga in the world, even after he has attained purity of heart. They are:

1. Dispassion wanes by contact with sense-objects - downfall comes.

2. Thoughts of the reality of the world creep in.

3. Remembrance of Brahman vanishes.

4. You cannot keep up the brahmakaravritti (thought of Brahman) for a long time, owing to vikshepa (tossing of the mind).

5. During work, the idea of duality and triputi (seer, sight, and seen) come in.

To become humbler than a blade of grass - this should be your ideal. Then you will develop patience, understanding, and you will have goodwill on all sides, from everyone. You should introspect in silence and solitude. Analyse points of criticism. Solitude will calm your emotions. The conclusions you arrive at will be sound.

Karma yogis should never let their emotions and excitement get the better of them. By following these instructions any action, sacred or secular, even if it is service of the family, may be converted into an act of worship leading to the most sublime goal of self-realisation.

23 APRIL - PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS

Here are some instructions to a karma yogi. Do not make any difference between menial and respectable work. Fix the mind on the Lord and give the hands to work. Sing God's name while serving others.

Feed the Door. Clothe the naked, Comfort the distressed. Do actions as your duty. Do not expect any thanks or appreciation, applause, salute, for your work. Spend one tenth of your income on charity. Share what you have with others. Always scrutinise your inner motives. Annihilate all selfish motives.

Give up abhimana (identification, pride) of all sorts. Never feel, "I have helped that man". Always think, "The Lord has given me an opportunity to serve him". Always be on the look out for ways to serve and never miss one single opportunity.

Do not be attached to the work - you must be able to give it up at any moment. Discipline the body and the mind again and again for fiery service. Non-attachment to work does not mean indifference.

Develop a passion for self-realisation, for freedom from birth and death, for liberation from bondage. One strong holy desire annihilates all worldly desires. This will help your progress towards freedom. Understand the theory of karma and cut the three knots - ignorance, desire and selfish action. Then you are beyond the law of karma. Then you are a liberated sage. This is your foremost duty. All other duties are self-imposed through attachment, ignorance and delusion.

Be equanimous in all conditions, knowing that they are nothing but the fruits of your own past actions, Be indifferent to the pairs of opposites. Always be rooted, inwardly, in the self. Always be blissful. Radiate bliss and joy. Now none is foe, none is stranger. Feel and see the self in all beings. Be devoted to the well-being of all humanity. Love for love's sake. Work for work's sake.

24 APRIL - BASIC KIRTANS OF SIVANANDA

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Eat a little, Drink a little, Speak a little, Sleep a little

Mix a little, Move a little, Serve a little, Think a little,

Give a little, Work a little, Rest a little, Worship a little.

Do Asan a little, Pranayam a little Meditate a little, Do Vichara a little.

Do Japa a little, Do Kirtan a little, Write Mantra a little, Reflect a little.

Purification, Concentration, Reflection, Meditation. Selflessness, Self-surrender, Self-purification, Self-realisation.

Do self-sacrifice, Effect self-surrender, Have self-restraint. You will have self-realisation. Speak sweetly, Speak truthfully, Think correctly, Believe faithfully.

Serve selflessly, Pray devotedly, Meditate ceaselessly, Realise perfectly.

Think no evil, See no evil, Hear no evil, Talk no evil.

Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realise Be good, Do good, Be kind, Be compassionate.

Practise Ahimsa, Satyam Brahmacharya This is the foundation of Yoga-Vedanta.

Practise Shravan Manan Nididhyasan You will attain Brahma Saksatkara

Find the knower, Find the hearer Find the seer, Find the smeller Find the taster, Find the feeler You will attain self-realisation.

Sarva Dharman Parityajya Mamekam Saranam Vraja Aham Tva Sarva Papebhyo Mokshayasyami Ma Sucha.

Om Tat Sat Om Om Santi Om

Om Tat Sat Om Om Santi Om

Hari Om Tat Sat Om Sri Om Tat Sat Om

Siva Om Tat Sat Om Om Tat Sat Om.

25 APRIL - SONG OF INSTRUCTIONS

Mohana bansiwale tumko lakhou pranam tumko lakhou pranam
Sankar bholevale tumko lakhou pranam
Tumko lakhon pranam pyare karoron pranam
Bhajo Radhe Govinda
Radhe Govinda bhajo Radhe Govinda,
Radhe Govinda bhajo Sita Govinda
Hari bolo, bolo bhai Radhe Govinda
Hare Krishna Hare Ram Radhe Govinda.
Get up at 4 a.m. Brahmamuhurta,
Get up at 4 a.m. Japo Rama Rama,
Get up at 4 a.m. Do Brahma Vichar,
Get up at 4 a.m. enquire 'Who am I'?,
Get up at 4 a.m. Practise Yogabhyas.

Observe Mauna daily for two hours,
Fast on Ekadasi, take milk and fruits,
Study daily one chapter of Gita,
Do regular charity, one-tenth income,
Rely on your own self, give up servants,
Do Kirtan at night, have Satsang.

Speak the truth at all costs, preserve virya,
Satyam Vada, Dharmam Chara, Observe Brahmacharya.
Ahimsa Paramo Dharma, Love one and all,
Never hurt others feelings, be kind to all,
Control anger by Ksama develop Vishwa Prem.
Keep daily spiritual diary, you will evolve quickly.

(Hare Krishna Hare Ram.....)

26 APRIL - SONG OF CHIDANAND

Chidananda Chidananda Chidananda Hoon
Har Halme Almast Satchidananda Hoon
Ajarananda Amardnanda Achalananda Hoon
Har Halme Almast Satchidananda Hoon

Antarai

Nirbhaya aur Nischinta Chidghanananda Hoon
Kaivalya Kevala Kutastha Ananda Hoon
Nitya Suddha Siddha Satchidananda Hoon
Knowledge Bliss, Knowledge Bliss, Bliss Absolute,
In all conditions I am Knowledge, Bliss Absolute.
I am without old age, without death, without motion
In all conditions, I am Knowledge Bliss Absolute.

Antarai

Am without fear without worry, Bliss Absolute
Existence Absolute
Knowledge Absolute
Independent, Unchanging, Non-dual Atma
Immortal Atma
Advaita Atma
Eternal pure, perfect Knowledge, Bliss Absolute
(Chidananda .....)

Sivananda Sivanand Sivananda Hoon
Aghadbhumwala Aghadbhumwala Akhilananda Hoon
Chidananda Chidananda Chidananda Hoon
Har Halme Almast Satchidananda Hoon
Nijanand Nijanand Nijananda Hoon
Har Halme Almast Satchidananda Hum.

27 APRIL - WHAT IS DEVOTION?

Make use of this precious human birth for the achievement of this supreme purpose - God-realisation. Pray to the Lord to make you desireless. But have one strong desire and let it be for attaining self-realisation. Through a life of devotion, service, purification, charity, sadhana (spiritual practice) and meditation attain the highest self realisation and dwell in the supreme peace and bliss (paramananda).

Devotion is supreme love of the Lord, supreme attachment to the Lord. The notion of God means an absolutely perfect being, who has all the possible attributes, including the attribute of existence; so God must exist. The existence of God cannot be proved by rational arguments. It is purely a question of faith and refers to the intuitive side of man.

The deepest craving, the deepest aspiration in man is for eternal happiness, eternal knowledge and eternal truth. Man should search for some supernatural entity which can satisfy his deepest aspirations.

As we explain everything within nature by the law of cause and effect, so also the nature as a whole must be explained. It must have some cause. This cause must be different from the effect. It must be some supernatural entity, i.e. God. Nature is not a mere chance collection of events, a mere jumble of accidents, but an orderly affair. The planets move regularly in their orbits, seeds grow into trees regularly. Seasons succeed each other in order. Now, nature cannot order itself. It requires the existence of an intelligent being, i.e. God, who is responsible for it.

Everything in nature has some purpose. It fulfils some function or other. Certainly every object by itself cannot choose a function for itself. Their different functions ought to have been planned or designed by a single intelligent being or God. You cannot explore or probe into the lila (sportive play) of God. You must accept it with faith and reverence.

What is the nature of God? God is love and love is God. God is the source for this world, body, mind, prana and senses. God gives light to the mind, sun, moon and stars. God is your only redeemer, refuge. God is your real father, mother, guru, friend and relative.

God is the only reality. God is the dispenser of fruits of actions. God is the designer and architect of the universe. God is immanent and transcendent. God is unchanging, undecaying and imperishable. God is the supreme goal, beauty, truth.

28 APRIL - PHILOSOPHY OF BHAKTI

Bhakti or devotion is indispensable for attaining jnana. Jnana is the condition necessary for bhakti to reach its fullest development in love. Knowledge without devotion is as futile as devotion without knowledge.

Love follows from the basic oneness of all beings. God is being. World is becoming. The creation of the world does not in any way affect the integrity of God. The world does not stand apart from God, but is pervaded by him.

Bhakti is not mere emotionalism but is the turning of the will as well as the intellect towards the divine. The ideal devotee is a karma yogi as well as a jnana yogi. Bhakti originates in knowledge, is essentially of the nature of love, and bursts forth in selfless action.

True love gives the highest wisdom, Diffused love is wisdom. Concentrated wisdom is love. True wisdom vibrates in the hearer. Bhakti begins with emotional dualism and culminates in monism. Lover and the loved, the devotee and the object of devotion, are fused into one spiritual ecstacy.

All creation is the family of God. This world is sustained by the power of God. The deepest urge of life is to know God and to live in God. God's will is the very law which governs the universe. All beings are guided and controlled by the divine will.

Life on this physical plane is a mere preparation for the eternal life in God. Though the Lord resides in all creatures and things, there is a difference in the degree of His manifestation in them. In human beings the Lord is more manifest than in others. And, among human beings, He is more or less manifest according to the degree of knowledge or consciousness that is realised.

He who follows the path of meditation knows his self as divine and one with God. Any man or woman has equal right to follow the path of devotion. The greatest sinner can practise devotion and attain God-realisation. Though unborn, God takes birth as an avatara (incarnation) to destroy the wicked, to protect virtue and to establish dharma (righteousness).

29 APRIL - GOD IS ALL IN ALL

There is one God. He is above all, in all, through all. He is all in all. In God all are united. God is the essential power and reality in all things. God is one, God is the all-pervading spirit and life of the universe.

God is the inner soul of all alike. In every form behold the blessed Lord himself. That is my yoga. Cows are of diverse colours but all milk is alike. The kinds of flowers vary, yet all worship is one. There is but one God - the creator, the governor of the world, almighty, eternal, incomprehensible. God is almighty - he governs every action in the universe. Not even an electron can move without his will.

God is always just. God is truth. God is love. God is absolute good, know that everything is vanity except God. God can be attained by truthful behaviour, by leading a highly moral life and by the acquisition of knowledge. God's way is mercy. God's name is love. God's first manifestation was sound.

In the eternity of God is real life. In truth God is eternal light. In the goodness of God is eternal bliss, peace and joy. God is near at hand to help you in your difficulties.

Difficult it is to get a human birth. Difficult it is to get a guru (spiritual preceptor). Difficult it is to attain God-realisation. But, through the grace of God, you can overcome all difficulties.

You have the urge of hunger and there is food to appease that hunger. You have the urge of thirst and there is water to quench that thirst. There is the urge to be always happy and there must be something to satisfy that urge. This 'something' is God.

Appeal. Knock. You will be heard. The door shall be opened unto you. Do not seek him far and wide - He is in your own heart - He has his dwelling there.

God is the great deliverer. Surely, He is near at hand to help you in your difficulties. God is the bread of life eternal. This bread is more than anything else. It is more abundant life.

God is the embodiment of happiness. Realise God and you will enjoy eternal happiness.

30 APRIL - THE NATURE OF GOD

God is self-luminous and self-existent. God is eternal, perfect, pure, free and all pervading. God is beginningless and endless. God is without pain, sorrow, fear, passion, caste, creed, sex and colour.

God is the indweller of your heart, God is the controller and governor of this world, body and mind. God is the centre of the whole of creation. He is the first causeless cause.

That supreme source of life is God. The Lord has become all. He permeates all. He is all in all. God is the way, the source, the goal, the truth and the life. God is with form and without form - like ice and steam.

God is your sole refuge, benefactor and master. God reveals himself to you in the form in which you love Him most. God cannot be comprehended but can be realised.

God sees without eyes, hears without ears, works without hands and tastes without tongue. God is unknowable through intellect but is knowable through intuition. The law and the law-giver are one - the eternal law is God himself.

God is near and far. He is nearer to the pure and sincere, but farthest to the passionate God witnesses all your thoughts and actions. God is your unseen guest at every meal. God is the head of your house. The reality of God is his universal existence (sat).

God is not responsible for the wealth of a man or for the poverty of another. Everyone bears the fruits of his karmas. God is the greatest doctor, the greatest engineer. He is the greatest mathematician.

God is the enjoyer and He is the object enjoyed. God is the high and He is the low. He is the knower and He is the known. God is the word spoken and He is the breath which speaks it.

God is the manifest and He is the unmanifest. God is the breath of all breath, the prana (life) of all pranas, the self of all selves.

He is the one ultimate truth, unborn, undying, everlasting, ever-existent, subtle and devoid of pain and sorrow.

1 MAY - THE GLORY OF GOD

God has no purpose. God is not bound by any action, just as the sun is not bound by the activities of the people of this world. God acts out of compassion for the individual soul. His sole purpose is to see that His creatures evolve spiritually.

God is the lover and the beloved at the same time. Justice, love, and goodness are expressions in the divine will.

In the word 'Bhagavan' - 'bhaga' signifies the six qualities of God. These are: jnana (wisdom), vairagyam (dispassion) kirti (fame), Sri (prosperity or wealth, divine aishvarya), shakti or bala (omnipotence), and dharma (righteousness),

According to the Prasnopanishad there are fifteen kalas or rays of God. These are: prana (life), faith, sky, air, fire, water, earth, senses, mind, food, strength, penance, mantra (mystic formula), karma (action) and name.

God has hands and feet everywhere. He has heads and eyes, mouths and ears everywhere. He is immanent in the world - possessing the vast whole. God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul.

Pleasure is due to virtuous actions and pain is due to vicious actions. Virtue and vice constitute adrsta (unseen potency). The various experiences of man are due to this adrsta. But adrsta is a blind force - it needs an intelligent director to guide it. And that intelligent director is God.

God is the verity of all verities. There is a moral and spiritual order through which is fulfilled the will of the Lord in the world. God has created not only the world, He has also created time along with it. God's knowledge is eternal, complete and perfect.

Who can know the will of God? He who knows God, he alone can know His will. God and His will are one. The Lord is the supreme healer - He is the divine indweller in all medicines.

2 MAY - GOD INDWELLS ALL THINGS

God is the subtle essence underlying all things. God is the salt of life. The Lord is the source of life and bliss. He is all in all, He is indivisible, indefinable. He is the only reality. His light pervades every being.

God creates the world and remains as its inner ruler. He also rises above the world. God is never involved in samsara (or the world process). God is the 'unmoved mover'. God desires and wills but does not experience pleasure or pain. God is not touched by evil. He is free from hate. God joins in himself all contraries and contradictions.

God is immanent in the world. He is also transcendental. He is the inner ruler of all souls. He is their goal also. God is both immanent and transcendent - He is in the world but also rises above it. The one God is hidden in all things. He pervades all things. He is the inner ruler of all things. He lives in all things. He is the soul of all.

God is within you. He dwells in your heart. Within everyone is this divine spark. Look above the beauty of the objects to the beauty of the cause, that which brought these beautiful objects into being. Feel God. See God in the rising sun and in the setting sun. See God in the little flowers. Talk to Him in the flowers. Have silent communion with God and His secrets or laws will be revealed unto you.

God is the source and strength of all life. He is the abode of bliss, peace and light. Everything in this world is a manifestation of the Lord, All joys and all sufferings are also the Lord's manifestations.

Divine will is an eternal, unalterable law. Surrender your will at the feet of the Lord. You will know the divine will. Or, identify yourself with God, then the divine will will be known. Mysterious, ever eluding comprehension, ever receding further and further, subtle, inexpressible, invisible and yet all-pervading, knowable only through intuition, devotion and purity - such is the Lord of the universe.

It is by the power of God alone that all spiritual people do their spiritual activities in this world of the pairs of opposites. God is revealed through the laws of nature and through the splendour of the human intellect.

3 MAY - GOD IS INFINITE

God is infinite. He is the indwelling presence. He has no limit. He dispels the fear of the devotees. He is an ocean of mercy and bliss. He is an ocean of limitless love. God is immutable. He is the giver of all happiness. God fulfils the desires of his devotees. He is the only shelter in danger.

God is the supreme resort of those who aspire for the highest bliss or final beatitude. He is mother, father, real friend, true preceptor and the supreme deity.

God is a mystery. His grace and ways are a greater mystery. God is the unchanging, unfading, eternal, almighty, all-wise, all-loving one - our refuge and our solace. God is our blissful, immortal abode where no danger can touch us, where no calamity can overwhelm us and where no thieves can attack us.

Know that everything but God is vanity, Love none but God. Hear none but God. Think of none but God. See none but God. To be in tune with God is to be like God. The first approach to God is sincerity and earnest love for him.

To know God is to love him. The more you know him the more you must love him. To know yourself is to know God, for then you perceive your relation with him. The more we develop ourselves, the more we find ourselves filled with love for him.

Speak to the Lord - not with the lips but with the heart. Day by day feel closer to God. Day by day feel more and more your oneness with all life. Walk close to God at all times . See all things in the light of truth and thus you will find freedom, the fullness of life, perfection and absolute independence. How to attain the Lord? He is the means himself - for all gifts flow from Him.

The real teacher is God. He lives in your heart. Seek Him. Find Him. Enter into Him. And rest peacefully, for ever. The Lord is within you. He has your souls as his abode.

God is the soul of your soul. He is the self of all. Offer everything to Him, unreservedly. Seek and you will find Him in your own heart.

4 MAY - DIVINE WISDOM

There is nothing eternal but He and there is no God besides Him. He is neither body, nor shape, nor form, nor person. He is chaitanya (or absolute pure consciousness). God is formless and yet He is the form of all forms.

God's beauty is love and His love is beauty. There is a power higher than yours, little man! Some of your desires are realised but many are thwarted. There is an over-ruling power which brings results and consequences, irrespective of your wishes and volition. This power is God.

Man has no volitional power or control over events. He is not a dictator of the future. God draws him hither and thither as he deserves. When there is an engine, there must be an engine-driver to control and direct it. Mind is the greatest engine and the engine-driver is God - He is the mind of all minds.

God possesses the eight supreme attributes: absolute self-control, absolute purity, absolute intuition, omniscience, absolute freedom, boundless grace, omnipotence and boundless bliss.

Mind is a power of God. Energy is a power of God. Matter is a power of God. God is not only all-power, all-wisdom, he is all-embracing love who freely gives his grace. Love is joy - the divine power is wisdom and love combined. There is no separation between divine power, wisdom and love. There is no copyright in God - His property is for universal use. Tulsidas and Mira saw God with their fleshy eyes - you too can see God with your normal eyes. You must go through the necessary disciplines and destroy egoism.

My God thou art my hope, my rest, my delight, my centre, my ideal, my goal, my soul, my all-in-all.

O Lord! I am in you and you are in me. I am He whom I love and He whom I love is I.

O wisdom divine! Enlighten my mind.

O love divine! Fill my heart with purity.

5 MAY - LOVE LEADS TO GOD

Truth, mercy, humility, self-control, purity, devotion, courage, dispassion, discrimination, serenity, equilibrium are the doors to liberation. Contentment is the greatest virtue - it makes a man richer than an emperor. It brings every blessing and everlasting peace. Bearing insult and injury is saintliness. Justice, mercy, compassion, honesty, selfless service, sacrifice, self-restraint, are the ingredients or limbs of "Be good, do good", yoga.

Self-control, charity, courage, compassion, humility, non-violence, truthfulness, purity and serenity are the cardinal virtues. Self-control means the control of the lower self by the higher self for the realisation of the self. The five virtues that lead to supreme blessedness are: truth, integrity, kindness, generosity and gentleness. Humility is the arch enemy of egoism. Therefore cultivate humility and egoism will perish. True humility is a mighty spiritual force. It is born of supreme realisation.

Courage, humility, purity, love and truthfulness are the real virtues of a man. Vrata is the practice of self-denial - it is a vow. There is a spirit of renunciation in every individual. It develops will power. Obedience is better than reverence. Obedience is better than sacrifice. Obedience is the secret of discipline. Kindness and love are the foods which sustain the soul within each one.

Is there one single virtue that will contribute to make the world a better place or a happier place? Is not unselfishness that virtue? Disinterested kindness is the highest virtue.

The nearest approach to truth or God is through love. Faith, devotion and love are immortal sisters. Love of God arises in the heart that is desireless. Love divine is the only solvent - the one great healer and forgiver. Love opens the doors of intuition. Love is the marriage of the individual soul and the supreme soul. The first condition of union with God is a state of love.

6 MAY - LOVE IS THE PANACEA

He who has no love cannot know God - for God is love. Love is the greatest force in this world. Love is immortal. Love is God. Where love is there God is. Therefore become an embodiment of love. Love is God. Love is light. Light is wisdom. Wisdom is divine life - it is oneness, unity.

The deeper a man's love of God is, the greater is his spiritual knowledge. The final consummation of the love of God is union with God. Love of God is not easily acquired by self-effort - it is inborn in man by virtue of his spiritual evolution.

Love God alone. Be detached and renounce everything for the sake of love of God. Cosmic love expects not any reward. It excludes none but includes all. Develop more and more pure divine love. Then the inner light will shine more brightly. Cultivate divine love. This selfless love is a great treasure - a pearl of great price.

Cultivate an abiding faith in God's love, mercy and grace. The lover himself becomes the beloved of his heart. Their love is so deep and intense that they merge in each other and then again re-emerge. They are the two inseparable aspects of the one.

Love envies not. Love resents not. Love revenges not. Love bargains not. God in his boundless love and mercy promptly chastises proud and arrogant persons, thus paving the way for a return to humility.

God reveals himself daily to every human being - but man shuts his eyes and does not see Him. Infinite is God. Infinite are His aspects and infinite are the ways to reach Him. The divine being is a living reality, a powerful presence that responds to our prayers, an all-pervading delight of existence that sustains our life.

Find God within yourself in silence.

Love is the cure for all evil. The power of love can transform the universe which is fettered in chains of hatred. Love is all-purifying and all-redeeming. Love is the greatest purifying force in the world. Love is the greatest creative force in the world.

7 MAY - TO LOVE MAN IS TO LOVE GOD

To love man is to love God alone. Man is the true image of God. He is his amsa (part). In the Gita you will find: "A portion of mine own self, transformed in the world of life into an immortal spirit, draweth around itself the senses, of which the mind is the sixth, veiled in matter." Chapter XV - 7. And: "Knowledge of sacrifice (adhiyajna speaks of Me as wearing the body, O best of living beings." Chapter VIII - 4.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. The aim of charity social service, altruism, humanitarianism, and so many other 'isms', is to develop this universal love, to expand one's heart ad infinitum. Theosophy speaks of universal brotherhood and tries to unite all through the common thread of cosmic love. Love is a great leveller. There is no power on earth greater than love. You can conquer this world even if you have one ray of this divine commodity which is absolutely free from even a tinge of selfishness. Pure love is a rare gift of God. It is the fruit of one's untiring service of humanity and incalculable virtuous actions in several incarnations. It is rare indeed.

He who possesses even a ray of this is a veritable God on earth. He is a mighty potentate. St. Paul says: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and if I have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing,”

True religion does not consist in religious observances, baths and pilgrimages but in loving all. Cosmic love is all-embracing and all-inclusive. In pure love no one is shut out from its warm embrace. It is wide enough to include the humblest of us, from the tiny ant to the mighty elephant, from the condemned prisoner to the mighty emperor, from the worst scoundrel on the surface of the earth, to the reputed saint.

It is hatred that separates man from man, nation from nation, country from country. It is pride and egoism that divide one man from another man. Hatred, pride, egoism all are mental creations - the products of ignorance only. They cannot stand before pure love. Just as darkness is dispelled by the penetrating rays of the burning sun, so also jealousy, hatred and egoism are dispelled by the rays of divine love.

8 MAY - UNSELFISH LOVE

The innate nature of all beings is to love an external object - we cannot but cherish something in the heart. For, truly, the absolute alone is existent. Man is only an ego, apparently separated from it.

Love for external things is an unconscious internal urge to become unified with everything. For, in reality, man is everything, the absolute itself. Love is the forerunner of experience. Love is the craving and experience is the fulfilment of it. None can live without love for something. "The creator pierced the senses with outward activity", and that rule applies to one and all. The mind is the main sense of perception, for it is only the mind that perceives through the various channels of the senses. The senses do not work when the mind does not.

Emotions are generally considered as a hindrance in perfect realisation, but only certain emotions are of a binding nature. Certain others will liberate the jiva (soul) from bondage. The conception of God does not rouse in man any binding emotion - it is pure emotion, without carnality or attachment. Love for God rouses the purest emotions; this is the significance of divine emotion in bhakti.

Love for God can never be the type of love cherished towards wife, children and property. There is much difference. How then does love give us liberation from samsara (worldliness)? Man is an egoistic entity. Ego is his only enemy. He feels he is entirely different from other things in the world. He is convinced that he is sharply marked off from the rest of the universe, by his physical body. He is sure he is only the body, even though he may try to deny this. When he says 'I' he always points to his chest and not to yonder tree.

"I am doing nothing. You are doing it through me. You are the doer. You are the enjoyer. I am nothing. Thy will be done." This is the highest type of love, this is divine love. Now the ego cannot assert itself for God alone is everywhere. Now the mind cannot modify itself into vrittis (or sense objects) for to him there is no object except God. Who is there left to be loved or hated?

"I feel extreme pangs of separation,
I will perish unless I behold thee.
Let me see thy face even for a minute.
Ah, who will take me to my beloved?
Who will show me his oath?
Who will console my heart now?
Sivananda says: O Hari! Give me the cup
of thy divine love and quench my thirst now."

9 MAY - PREMA YOGA (I)

Prema is intense, concentrated, pure love of the Lord. Prema brings the devotee face to face with the Lord. Bhakti culminates in PREMA. Prema is pure nectar. Prema destroys pains and sorrows. It makes one immortal and blissful and peaceful. It is very difficult to describe the nature of prema You will have to experience it yourself. Cultivate it through japa (repetition of God's name), kirtan (chanting), satsanga (holy company), service of devotees and study of the scriptures. Repetition of hymns and so on will instil in your heart peace, joy, bliss. Sing the praises of the Lord daily to obtain the Lord's grace and dwell in him always.

Educate your eyes to see God in all faces, to behold the divine form in all beings. Educate your ears to hear the sweet melodious kirtans (hymns) of Lord Hari. Educate your tongue to sing his praises and to utter pleasant, loving and truthful words. Educate your hands to do charity and serve the poor. Educate the mind to be cheerful always, to think of him always and to be calm. This is the true path to develop PREMA.

The search for the highest truth, a little meditation on the ishtam (one's own deity) in the early morning hours, a well-regulated life, a remembrance of the immortal nature of God, and an attempt to feel his presence in all forms, in your private and your public life, will give a balance and a rhythm to your life and inner spiritual strength and courage.

Have ceaseless devotion to truth. Be ready to sacrifice all for it. You will develop a strong will. You will become fearless. You will draw immense strength and courage from within, from him who is the indweller of all beings. You will attain God-realisation.

There is only one truth - God. And there is nothing else. The world is His manifestation. All activities, happenings, doings, are His. All is He. This world is ephemeral and a passing show, a phenomenon only for a time. There is no individual existence. The individuality is simply imaginary, an ignorant condition of the mind.

Love looks not with the eyes but with the heart. It is the crowning grace of humanity. Love is indeed heaven upon earth. It casts out fear. Love your neighbour as your own self. Love God with all your heart, mind and soul. Pure love is a divine flame, ever brilliant, never exhausted. It is the very essence of pure love to be willing to suffer for the good of others, to place its happiness in the happiness of others.

10 MAY - PREMA YOGA (II)

To define God is to deny God. You can give definition of a finite object only. How can you define the limitless or infinite being who is the source and ultimate cause for everything? If you define God you are limiting the limitless one, you are confining him within the concept of the mind. God is beyond the gross mind, but he can be realised through meditation with a pure, subtle and one-pointed mind.

Purity of food leads to purity of mind. This implies that all the objects which are grasped by the senses must be pure. The ears should hear the sublime utterances of Gita, Ramayana and the Bhagavatam, and the kirtans (hymns) of Lord Hari. Let your clothing be satvic (or pure). Let your speech be pure. Let your companions be satvic persons. Let the books you study be pure. Let the place you live in be satvic Let the meditation room be decorated with satvic pictures of the Lord. Then only you will soon attain God-consciousness. You will find in the Peace Chant these words: "O Gods! May we with our ears hear what is auspicious. O ye, fit to be worshipped, may we with our eyes see what is auspicious." Without love a man's life is empty.

Without love man lives in vain. Love is vital. Love is a great power. Give love and it shall be given unto you. Cultivate this love through service, japa (repetition of God's name , satsanga (holy company) and meditation. Strive ceaselessly to live in God, then only will you be able to conquer time or death.

God is always with you. He will protect and deliver you. Take refuge in him. His blessings will overflow in your life and will transform your mind and body. Develop your consciousness of spiritual things. Make a special effort daily to exercise control over your thoughts, words and actions. Feel his presence in your room. Pray daily. Meditate daily.

Friend! For a little while concentrate thy mind on the indweller of your heart. Abandon all worldly pleasure. Take to the path which is trodden by the righteous, Live on milk and fruits for a week. Endure cold and heat, hunger and thirst. Do not injure any creature to the slightest degree. Live a contented life. Regard applause and censure equally. Derive happiness from thy soul.

11 MAY - GOD IS LOVE

God is love. Love is God. God is nectar. God is prem. Bhakti is supreme love towards God. Bhakti is the greatest power on earth. It gushes from one's pure heart. It redeems and saves. It purifies the heart. Devotion is the seed. Faith is the root. Service of the saints is the shower. Communion with the Lord is the fruit.

Bhakti is of two kinds - apara bhakti (a lower type of devotion) and para bhakti (supreme love). Ringing bells and waving lights is apara bhakti. A devotee who practises this has no expanded heart, is a sectarian and dislikes other kinds of bhaktas who worship other deities. In par! bhakti, there is no ritualistic worship, the devotee is absorbed in God. In supreme love the devotee forgets himself entirely; he only thinks thoughts of God. Para bhakti and jnana are one. In the end the two become one.

Bhakti grows gradually just as you grow a flower or a tree in a garden. Cultivate bhakti in the garden of your heart gradually. Faith is necessary for attaining God realisation. Faith can work wonders. Faith can move mountains. Faith can take you to the inner chambers of the Lord where reason dare not enter.

Japa (repetition of God's name), kirtan (chanting), prayer, service of saints, study of books on bhakti all are aids to devotion. So too is satvic (pure) food such as fruit and milk etc.

Evil company is the enemy of devotion. Give up evil company and take recourse to satsanga (or the company of saints). Pray to the Lord thus: "O adorable Lord of compassion and love! Give me faith and devotion. Let my mind be ever fixed on thy lotus feet. Let me have constant remembrance of thee. Let me sing thy glory always."

A bhakta always does everything to please the Lord. He will abandon everything that displeases the Lord. Thus he corrects himself and removes all defects. He does not practise deliberate self-discipline like a yogi.

12 MAY - INTENSE DEVOTION

Bhakti is the slender silken thread of pure love that binds the heart of the devotee to the lotus-feet of the Lord. Bhakti is the intense devotion and supreme attachment we feel for God. It is a spontaneous outpouring of love towards God. It is pure and unselfish.

Bhakti is sacred love. It is a higher emotion, with sublime sentiment, that unites the devotee with the Lord. It has to be experienced. Human love is hollow; it is mere animal attraction; it is passion; it is carnal love; it is selfish love. It is ever-changing. It is all show and hypocrisy.

When the husband is unemployed, the wife no longer cares for him; she frowns at him. The husband dislikes his wife when she loses her beauty on account of some chronic disease. You can find real, lasting love in God alone. His love knows no change.

Bhakti is the basis of all religious life. Bhakti destroys vasanas (psychological tendencies) and egoism. A life without bhakti, faith, love and devotion is a dreary waste. Bhakti softens the heart and removes jealousy, hatred, lust, anger, egoism, pride and arrogance. Bhakti infuses joy, divine ecstasy, bliss, peace and knowledge.

All cares, worries, anxieties, fears, mental torment and tribulations vanish entirely. Then the devotee is freed from the wheel of birth and death. He attains the immortal abode of everlasting peace, bliss and knowledge.

In sakamya (desire motivated) bhakti the bhakta worships God for the sake of getting riches, for getting a son, or for the removal of suffering from a disease. In vyabhicarini (insincere) bhakti the devotee worships God for some time - then he worships his wife, children and property for some time.

To love God and God alone is avyabhicarini (sincere bhakti. Lord Krishna say: "I am not in my control. I am in the complete control of my bhaktas (devotees). They have taken entire possession of my heart. How can I leave them when they have taken entire possession of my heart? How can I leave them when they have renounced everything for my sake? He who seeks me in all things, and all thin in me, to him I am never lost, nor he to me."

13 MAY - NATURE OF BHAKTI

Bhakti is resting in God. Bhakti is the flow of devotion like the flow of a river. Bhakti is continuity of devotion, just as there is continuity in the flow of oil from one vessel to another vessel. Bhakti is the attraction of the needle to the magnet.

Bhakti is love for the sake of love. The devotee wants God and God alone. There is neither selfish expectation nor fear. Is the son afraid of his father though he is a judge? Is the wife afraid of her husband? So also, a devotee entertains not the least fear of God. The fear of retribution vanishes in him. He feels, believes, conceives and imagines that his chosen deity is an ocean of love (prema).

Bhakti transmutes man into divinity. It intoxicates the devotee with divine love and gives him eternal satisfaction. It makes him perfect, weans his mind from sensual objects and makes him rejoice in God.

Emotional excitement is not devotion to God. Devotion is pure love, Fanaticism is not devotion, but frenzy, mere excitement. Bhakti is not mere emotionalism, but is the tuning of the will as well as the intellect towards the divine. It is supreme love of God, and later blossoms into knowledge of the self. It leads to immortality. Bhakti is the direct approach to the ideal through the heart. Love is natural to everybody.

Bhakti can be practised under all conditions and by all alike. Study of the Vedas (the revealed scriptures of the Hindus, containing the Upanishads), learning, austere penance and brilliant intellect are not needed for the attainment of bhakti or devotion. What is wanted is constant and loving remembrance of God, coupled with faith. That is the reason why the path of devotion is available for everyone.

Bhakti is easier than any other way of approach to God. In jnana (self-knowledge) and yoga, there is the risk of a fall. In the path of devotion, there is no risk as the devotee receives full support and help from God.

14 MAY - BHAKTI AND JNANA

Those who tread the path of jnana and yoga are liable to become proud of their powers and wisdom. Bhaktas are humble, humility being the foundation of bhakti yoga.

Jnana yoga is the yoga of wisdom. It is the path of analysis and rejection. It is the path of endless negation, a very difficult path.

Raja yoga also is difficult. It is like stilling the waves of the ocean. You will have to still all the thought-waves. Karma yoga is also difficult. It is like climbing to the highest peak and tremendous will-power is needed. Bhakti yoga alone is easy. The Lord is stretching his hands to lift you up from the mire of births and deaths, but you will have to grasp his hands firmly. One thing is absolutely essential here; you should not have any other thought than that of God and God alone.

A devotee contracts, while a vedantin expands. The former contracts and enters the Lord through self-surrender, while the latter expands and becomes one with Brahman through assertion and identification.

The fruit of bhakti is jnana. Jnana intensifies bhakti. Even sages like Sankara, Madhusudana and Shukadev took to bhakti after realisation to enjoy the sweetness of loving relationship with God.

Knowledge or wisdom will dawn by itself when you practise bhakti yoga. Bhakti is the pleasant, smooth, direct road to God. Bhakti is sweet in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. It gives the highest, everlasting bliss.

Love the divine in thy heart, for this is the immediate way to the kingdom of God. Pray to the Lord, sing his glory, recite his name and become a channel for his grace. Seek his will, do his will, surrender unto the Lord. He will become your charioteer on the field of life. He will drive your chariot well and you will reach the destination, the abode of immortal bliss.

15 MAY - GET NEARER TO GOD

Maya is the Lord's illusory power. God creates through maya It is maya that makes the one universal spirit appear as many, as embodied in multiple forms, and delights in the same objects, the false ideas of 'I' and 'mine'. Total, unreserved self-surrender to the Lord alone will enable you to cross this maya and attain His lotus-feet.

Bhakti yoga sadhana is to unfold yourself continually and to endeavour, continually, to get nearer to God. The more you unfold yourself, the more guidance you will receive and the more power you will manifest. O man! Conquer thy craving. Conquer thy attachment. You will soon attain God-realisation. In meditation the mind is turned back upon itself, the mind stops all the thought waves.

Truth is love. Love the Lord. Speak truth. Cultivate pure unselfish love. Rest in truth. Rest in the Lord of love. Make your heart empty of all other things. Then alone will God enthrone Himself in your heart. Equal vision is the test of God-realisation and the way to God is through the heart. God can be realised through faith, devotion, surrender and meditation. Trust in the Lord. Surrender yourself to Him. He will bless you with peace and plenty. He will bestow upon thee all health, prosperity and success.

Worship the Lord with true devotion. Lead a life of purity, humility and selflessness. Remember God. Take His name always. Meditate upon Him. Know the Lord to be the one reality in the midst of unreal things. Think often of God, by day and by night. He is always near you and with you - He dwells in the chambers of your heart.

Dedicate all the fruits of actions and the action itself to the Lord. This is the entrance to devotion and freedom from bondage. Worship the Lord continually. Live with Him. Put your trust in Him. Think of Him continuously and you will dwell with Him.

Pray to God sincerely for strength and patience to bear pain, but not for deliverance from pain. Pain is a blessing from God. He employs it for your spiritual upliftment and emancipation. Be satisfied with any condition God places you in. God is nearer and more effectively present in sickness than in health. He is your unequalled, supreme physician and surgeon.

16 MAY - THE FLOWER OF FLOWERS

Divine love (or prema) is the flower of flowers. It is the rarest of all flowers and it is cultivated in the hearts of all devotees. Prema or bhakti is intense love, or the highest form of devotion to God. it is supreme attachment to the lotus-feet of the Lord. It springs from the bottom of the devotee's heart. In it there is no effort, there is only genuine, natural, spontaneous longing to meet God.

Just as a fish cannot live without water, just as the sunflower cannot live without the sun, just as the chaste wife cannot live without her husband, so also a true devotee cannot live without God - even for a moment. Bhakti or prema is of the nature of nectar. It gives freedom to the devotee and makes him perfectly and fully satisfied. It takes him to the feet of the Lord.

There are three things which are indeed rare and are due to the grace of the Lord. They are human birth, the longing for liberation and the protecting care of a perfected sage. The man who, having by virtuous actions in previous births, obtained a human birth and a good intellect, is foolish indeed not to exert for self-realisation. He verily commits suicide, for he kills himself by clinging to things unreal.

There is no hope of immortality by means of riches. Such indeed is the emphatic declaration of the srutis (scriptures). The scriptures declare: "Na karmana na prajaya dhanena tyagenaike amrtatva masasuh" - "neither by rituals, nor by progeny, nor by riches, but by renunciation alone can one attain immortality." Mere giving up of objects will not constitute real renunciation. Dear friends, remember this point well. Real tyaga (renunciation) consists in renouncing egoism, 'mine'-ness, selfishness, anger, pride, desires and cravings.

People despise this Kali Yuga. This is a mistake for in Kali Yuga you can attain God-realisation easily, you do not have to do hard tapas (austerities). Merely singing the names of the Lord and by his constant remembrance will you attain God-realisation. Wherever there are satsanga (holy company), kirtan (chanting), svadhyaya (study of scriptures), bhaktas, swamis and yogis - there is Satya Yuga (golden age). In all ashrams and holy places Satya Yuga prevails. Kali cannot enter here.

17 MAY - IMPORTANCE OF GURU BHAKTI

Here is bhakti yoga in a nutshell. Select an ishta devata (a favourite deity) - either Siva, Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Dattatreya, Gayatri or Shakti - according to the advice of your guru, or your own inclination. Get the proper mantra (a mystic formula). Then keep a picture of that particular deity in front of you in the meditation room. For six months gaze steadily at the picture from fifteen seconds to fifteen minutes. Concentrate on the figure, without winking, until the tears flow profusely.

Study the scriptures constantly - the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana, the Narada Bhakti Sutras and the Sandilya Sutras. Live for one year in a holy place. Pass through the course of nava vidha bhakti (nine devotional practices). Repeat your mantra constantly. Sleep only for three hours. Select an attitude suitable for you madhurya sakhya, daasya or vatsalya (lover-beloved, friend, servant or mother-child). Make ungrudging, unreserved, true, perfect self-surrender to God. Pray from the bottom of your heart. Prayer can move mountains. Prayer can reach a realm wherein reason can hardly enter.

Have devotion to one ideal. Bhakti must be unswerving, one-pointed, single-minded devotion. Slowly develop anuraga prema, priti, viraha (pain of separation from God), bhava, and maha bhava (stages or states of God-love). In maha bhava the devotee is unconscious of his body and the world. He is absolutely merged in God. From lower bhakti the devotee passes on to higher (para) bhakti. A devotee gets progressive emancipation after passing through salokya sampiya sarupya and sayujya mukti stages in emancipation or liberation.

After enjoying lower mukti a devotee finally attains kaivalya moksha - the same state as that of a jnani An earnest seeker with perseverance can realise God within two or three years. I assure you emphatically. So make a sincere effort and watch the results. Follow Lord Krishna's instructions, given in the Bhagavad Gita and described as: MACCHITTA, YUKTA, MATPARA - With the mind totally absorbed in God, united with God, with God as the goal and ideal.

18 MAY - AIDS TO BHAKTI

People put the question: "How can we love God whom we have not seen?" Live in the company of saints and hear of the divine sport of God, study the sacred scriptures. Worship Him first in His several forms as manifested in the world. Worship any image or picture of the Lord or the guru. Recite His name, sing His glories. Stay for a year in Brindavan or Ayodhya, Chitrakute, Pandharpur, Benares, or Ananda Kutir. You will develop love for the Lord.

Every act must be done that awakens the emotion of bhakti. Keep the room of worship clean, decorate it, burn incense, light a lamp, keep a clean seat, bathe and wear clean clothes. Apply ash and kumkum (sacred red powder worn on the forehead by devotees). Wear a rosary, either that made of beads symbolising the third eye of Siva or that which is made from the stalks of the holy basil. All these produce a benign and elevating influence on the mind inspiring it and generating piety. They help to create the necessary attitude or feeling to invoke the deity that you want to worship. The mind will be able to concentrate easily.

Practice of right conduct, keeping company with the holy, repetition of God's name, remembrance, singing of the names of the Lord, prayer, worship, service of saints, residence in places of pilgrimage, service of the poor and the sick with divine feeling, observance of duties, offering of all actions and their fruits to the Lord, feeling the presence of the Lord in all beings, prostrations before the image and saints, renunciation of earthly enjoyments and wealth, charity, austerities, and vows, practice of ahimsa (non-violence), truth and celibacy all these will help you to develop devotion.

Desire obstructs the growth of devotion. Devotion to the Lord increases in intensity when mundane desires are renounced. Renunciation is the very essence of devotional love. Divine love has no element of desire in it.

Devotion cannot co-exist with desire of any kind, not even the desire for liberation. The devotee wants God and God alone, and His loving service. The devotee loves God and serves Him and His creation. He does not strive consciously for liberation which God confers on his devotee unsolicited.

19 MAY - THE SAVING GRACE

Japa is the best of all spiritual practices in this modern age. It is the easiest too. The divine name alone will give you all success and bestow on you the highest spiritual attainments.

The seeker after truth reaches the highest goal by japa or recitation of the Lord's name (or mantra) alone. This is a sure medicine for the disease of birth and death. If you take to the recitation of the divine name, all inauspiciousness will certainly vanish.

Smarana is remembrance of the Lord at all times. The mind does not think of any object of the world. It is engrossed in thinking of the glorious Lord alone. The mind meditates on the glories of the Lord and forgets the body. Even japa is only remembrance of the Lord.

Ever remember the Lord. His divine name is the greatest treasure on earth. It has got indescribable power of bestowing blessings upon all who have faith. It is a good idea to recite the mantras at bedtime.

In ordinary self-consciousness there is duality between the repetitioner and the name. It is discursive. It is within the fields of ordinary experience. It is confined within the categories of the mind, of limited conceptions. Ultimately the ordinary self-consciousness is elevated into a transcendental experience, into a state of superconsciousness.

The repetitioner and the name become one. The eternally revealed truth reveals itself to him and he realises his oneness with the supreme. The sense of duality, the gulf of separateness between the finite and the infinite is removed.

Spiritual life needs harmony in all parts of your being. Spiritual truth can only be realised when the whole being is perfectly at ease and in tune with the divine. Mantra (the name of God) has the power to release cosmic and supracosmic consciousness. It bestows illumination, freedom, supreme peace, eternal bliss and immortality.

20 MAY - HUMAN NATURE INTO DIVINE NATURE

God is a mystery, Mind is a mystery. The world is a mystery. How sankirtan transmutes human nature into divine nature, how it overhauls the old vicious habits, how it changes the mental substance, how it transforms or metamorphoses the impure nature into pure nature, and how it brings the devotee face to face with God - this also is a mystery.

Science and reason can hardly explain the 'modus operandi' of sankirtan (chanting), Reason is an imperfect instrument. A man of weak intellect can be defeated by one who has a stronger intellect. Reason cannot explain many of life's problems. Intuition transcends reason; it does not contradict reason.

There is great shakti (power) in every word. The very utterance of the word 'hot pakouri' (a tasty savoury) brings saliva to the mouth. If you speak about 'faeces' when a man is taking his meal, he will immediately vomit, When such is the case with ordinary words, what to speak of the names of God? Every name of God is filled with various divine potencies and nectar.

One objector says. "If I say, 'sugar-candy, sugar-candy' can I get it? Row can I see God if I simply say 'Rama, Rama'?" In the case of sugar-candy, sugar-candy is outside, but God resides in the very chamber of your heart. He is close to you. By repeating "Rama, Rama", the mind becomes one-pointed. It melts in silence and, in the heart, you will get the darsan (vision) of God. The name of God is as good as God himself. God is chaitanya (consciousness, energy) and so is his name. It is not so with other objects or names of objects.

There is a man in sound sleep. The prana (life) is there; it is awake, He will not respond if you call, "Prana prana". But just call him by his name and he will hear you and will get up from his sleep. Such is the power of the name. The name is nothing but chaitanya (consciousness) personified.

21 MAY - THE POWER OF SOUND

The subtler the element, the more powerful it is. Water is more powerful than earth because it is more subtle. Water removes earth away. Fire is more powerful than water because it is subtler than water. Fire dries up water. Air is more powerful than fire because it is more subtle than fire. Air blows away fire. Akasha (ether) is more powerful than air because it is more subtle than air. Air rests in akasha. Akasha is the support for the air. Air is born of akasha fire is born of air, water is born of fire, earth is born of water. During the cosmic dissolution the earth is reduced to or involved into water, water into fire, fire into air, and air into akasha.

The barrier that separates man from the supreme soul, is mind. The five subtle elements, earth, water, fire, air, ether, which go to constitute the body of the antahkarana (psyche), are the five robbers who have plundered the jewel of atman Akasha is the ring-leader. If you control akasha if you subdue the ring-leader, the other four elements or robbers will come under your control. If you can control the five elements you can control the mind very easily. The function of akasha is sound. Therefore kirtan helps the aspirant to control the mind easily and thereby attain God-consciousness.

Sound exists in four fundamental states: dense, audible sound - sound at its maximum differentiation; inner, subtle, more ethereal sound - inaudible to the human ear; a higher inner and more ethereal state; the potential state of sound - undifferentiated, the primal substratum of all sounds, the source of the universe.

The mind is purified by constant kirtan (chanting). It is filled with good and pure thoughts. Daily kirtan strengthens good samskaras (habits). The mind of a man who trains himself in thinking good, holy thoughts, develops a tendency to think good thoughts. His character is moulded and transformed by continuous good thoughts.

He who entertains thoughts of divinity becomes transformed actually into divinity himself. His bhava (disposition) is purified and divinised. The meditator and the meditated, the worshipper and the worshipped, the thinker and the thought, become one and the same. This is samadhi This is the fruit of kirtan or upasana (adoration).

My dear friends, do sankirtan daily. Disseminate sankirtan bhakti far and wide. Develop vishvaprem (cosmic love) through sankirtan. Realise your sat-chit-ananda state!

22 MAY - THE LORD'S NAME

The name is a verbal expression of the conception of the Supreme Being, who is known by different names and forms, in different climes and times. The supreme is infinite but as it is not always possible for the common man to conceive of what is beyond the perception of the finite mind, this infinite truth is symbolised as forms, symbols or objects, that vary according to each one's respective tendencies or modes of perception.

Though in the initial stage there is difference and distinction among the various names and their associated objects, ultimately, when the habit of repetition of the name is formed and the divine consciousness is kept ever awake, then there remains no distinction between the name and the associated idea or object. The intuitive knowledge of the supreme reveals itself in the name itself - for the basis of all names and forms is the one primal being who manifests himself under different names and forms, as different faiths and tendencies, as different sects and races, in different times and places.

There is an unfathomable depth, intense sweetness and charm in the Lord's name. It is beyond the futile explanation of the limited intellect. It is a thing knowable only through experience. The music first thrills the nerves, harmonises them and then mysteriously acts upon the mind. The sincere devotee loses himself in divine ecstasy.

The worldly mind cannot grasp or perceive this state of intense emotion. The Lord's name is all bliss and when it is chanted, the mind merges in its bliss. It loses its individual entity in bliss. It becomes one with the bliss itself.

Without the name of the beloved none may hope to cross the sea of samsara (worldly existence). The Lord's name is the lasting medicine against any kind of ailment. You cannot be overtaken by sorrows, sins, troubles, sicknesses if you take refuge in the Lord's name. Repetition of the Lord's name dispels all fears and evil thoughts. He who repeats the name of the Lord has all his desires fulfilled. So sing the holy name. If you are attached to the Lord you will be released from all attachments which bind you and pull you down. This constant repetition gives infinite strength.

23 MAY - GOD AND HIS NAME ARE ONE

What a lot of joy the repetition of His name brings! What a lot of power it infuses into man! How it changes the human nature marvellously! How it exalts a man to the status of divinity! How it destroys old sins, vasanas (tendencies), sankalpas (thoughts), whims, fancies, depressing moods, sex-impulses, and various samskaras (psychological impressions)!

How sweet is God's name! What a tremendous power it possesses! How it transforms quickly the asuric (diabolical) nature into satvic (divine) nature! How it brings you face to face with the Lord and makes you realise your oneness with him (para bhakti - supreme love)!

The name of God, chanted correctly or incorrectly, knowingly or unknowingly, carefully or carelessly, is sure to give the desired result. Every name is filled with countless potencies (shaktis). Its glory is indescribable. The efficacy and inherent shakti of the name of God is unfathomable.

Just as fire has the natural property of burning inflammable things, so also the name of God has the power of burning sins, samskaras and vasanas and bestowing eternal bliss and everlasting peace on those who repeat it. Just as burning quality is natural to and inherent in fire, so also the power of destroying sins with their very root and branch and bringing the aspirant into blissful union with the Lord through bhava-samadhi (culmination of devotion) is natural to and inherent in the name of God.

O man! Take refuge in the name. Nami (God) and Nama (name) are inseparable. Sing the Lord's name incessantly. Remember the name of the Lord with every incoming and outgoing breath. In this present age japa (repetition of God's name) is the easiest, quickest, safest and surest way to reach God and attain immortality and perennial joy. Glory to the Lord! Glory to his name!

24 MAY - MANTRA IS POWER

There is an indescribable power in the mantra (God's name). Shakti is the energy or form of the mantra, i.e. the vibration form set up by its sound which carries a man to the devata that is worshipped. A mantra accelerates and generates the creative force. Mantra produces harmony in body and mind and awakens supernatural powers.

If you repeat the mantra with concentration and meaning you will attain God-realisation quickly. The glory of the name cannot be established through the intellect. It can be realised only through devotion and faith and constant repetition. That which shines above all, having made the whole world equal to a blade of grass, full of the light of consciousness, bliss, purity - is only the sweet name of the Lord.

Sweeter than all sweet things, more auspicious than all auspicious things, purer than all pure things is the name of the Lord. OM is everything. OM is the name of God. Name is the bridge that connects the devotee with God. God's name is the way and the goal. Name is the weapon to destroy the mind. The name has the power to burn sins and desires.

As you repeat the mantra feel that the Lord is seated in your heart, that purity is flowing from the Lord to your mind. The name serves as gate-keeper; it never allows worldly thoughts to enter the mind.

Remembrance of God also includes hearing stories pertaining to God at all times, talking of God, teaching to others what pertains to God, meditation on the attributes of God etc. God is to be remembered at all times, without a break, as long as one has consciousness intact. Right from the time he gets up from sleep in the morning, until he is completely overpowered by sleep in the night, a person is to remember God. He has no other duty in the world but to remember God.

Remembrance of God alone can destroy all worldly samskaras. Remembrance of God alone can turn the mind away from sense objects.

25 MAY - MANTRA YOGA

Mantra yoga is a great science. "Manana trayate iti mantrah" - "by manana (constant thinking or recollection) one is protected or released from the round of birth and death - that is mantra." That is called mantra, by meditating on which the jiva or soul attains freedom from sin, enjoyment in heaven and final liberation. And, by its aid it attains in full the fourfold fruit (chaturvarga) i.e., dharma, artha, kaama and moksha (virtue, wealth, pleasure and liberation). A mantra is so called because it is achieved by the mental process. The root 'man' in the word mantra means 'to think'. And 'tra' comes from 'trai' meaning to protect or to free - from the bondage of samsara or the phenomenal world. By the combination of 'man' and 'tra' comes mantra which calls forth the four aims of being chaturvarga. A mantra is divinity. It is divine power manifesting in a sound body. The mantra itself is the devata (deity). The aspirant should try his level best to realise his unity with the mantra of the divinity. To the extent he does so, the mantra-power supplements his worship-power. Just as a flame is strengthened by winds, so also the aspirant's individual shakti (power) is strengthened by mantra shakti. Then the individual shakti joins with the mantra shakti to make it more powerful.

The mantra is awakened from its sleep through the sadhana-shakti (worship power) of the aspirant. The mantra is a mass of radiant energy.

Even to visualise the Lord in meditation just once, to utter the divine name of the Lord, with love, even a single time, has surely got a tremendous, transforming influence upon the soul. You are free here and now. Only you are not aware of it, through the force of maya (or ignorance).

This atman is peace. Realise this peace that passeth all understanding and be free for ever. Peace is thy birthright. Peace is thy real, essential nature. Peace is Brahman. Peace and Brahman are one.

26 MAY - BENEFITS OF JAPA

Japa (repetition of the mantra checks the force of the thought current moving towards objects. It forces the mind to move towards God, towards the attainment of eternal bliss. Eventually it helps us to have the darshana (vision) of God. The mantra-power is hidden in every mantra. Whenever the spiritual aspirant shows lack of vigour in his sadhana (practice), the mantra shakti (power of the mantra) reinforces the sadhana shakti (energy) of the aspirant, Constant and prolonged repetition of the mantra (name of God) for some months, cuts new grooves in the mind and the brain.

During japa all the divine qualities steadily flow into your mind from the Lord, just as oil flows from one vessel to another vessel. Japa transforms the nature of the mind. It fills the mind with satva (purity).

Japa changes the mental substance from passion to purity, from rajas to satva. It calms and strengthens the mind. It makes the mind introspective - it checks the outgoing tendencies. Japa eradicates all kinds of evil thoughts and inclinations. It induces determination, and austerity and eventually it leads to the direct darshana (vision) of God (the ishta devati or tutelary deity) or to God-realisation.

The mind is purified by constant japa and worship and it is filled with good and pure thoughts. Repetition of mantra and worship strengthen the good samskaras. "As a man thinks so he becomes" - this is the psychological law. The mind of the man who trains himself to think good, holy thoughts, develops a tendency to think good thoughts. His character is moulded and transformed by the continuous flow of good thoughts.

When the mind thinks of the image of the Lord during japa and worship, the mental substance actually assumes the form of the image. The impression of the object is left on the mind and this is called samskara When the act is repeated very often, the samskara gain strength and a tendency or habit is formed in the mind.

He who entertains thoughts of divinity becomes transformed actually into divinity itself. This is the power of constant thinking and meditation. His disposition itself is divinised and purified.

The meditator and the meditated, the worshipper and the worshipped, the thinker and the thought, become one and the same thing. This is samadhi. This is the fruit of worship (upasana) or of doing japa.

27 MAY - LORD IS YOUR SOLE REFUGE

The name of the Lord is your sole refuge. It is your prop, shelter and abode. Name is divine nectar. Name and form are inseparable.

Keep a picture of the Lord and concentrate on it. Concentrate on the face or feet or the whole picture. Then visualise this in your heart or in the space between the eyebrows.

Repeat your mantra - Om Namah Sivaya Om Namo Narayanaya - Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya mentally, or if the mind wanders do this verbally.

There are five kinds of bhavas or attitudes. They are shaanta bhava (relationship of peace), daasya bhava (relation-ship of servant-master), vaatsalya bhava (relationship of father-son), sakhya bhava (relationship of friendship) and madhurya bhava (relationship of lover and beloved). Have any kind of bhava that suits your temperament. Develop it again and again.

Practise the nine modes of devotion - shravana (hearing the lilas or stories of the Lord), kirtana (singing the Lord's name), smarana (remembering the Lord), padasevana (service of the Lord's feet), archana (offering of flowers), vandana (prostration) daasyam (servant bhava sakhya (His friendship), and atmanivedana (self-surrender).

Feel that you are an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Feel that the Lord works through your body, mind and senses. Offer all your actions to the Lord. Offer the fruits of your actions to the Lord. This is the way to do self-surrender.

Do anusthana (intense whole-time practice) frequently. Live on milk and fruits for a week. Observe mauna (or silence). Do japa (repetition of God's name) and meditate in an intense manner. Do mental worship, it is a great help for increasing devotion and attaining concentration. Offer flowers, incense etc., mentally, to the Lord.

God is all-pervading.
God is all-permeating.
God is interpenetrating.
God is indwelling.

28 MAY - SANKIRTAN IS SPIRITUAL FOOD

People do sankirtan with surprising enthusiasm and vigour for a year or two but after that they become slothful and torpid. The same zeal should be kept up throughout life. Just as food and drink are not dispensed with, even far one day so also sankirtan should not be stopped even for a day, Sankirtan is indeed a spiritual food. Nay, it is a, physical and mental tonic as well. You can live on sankirtan.

When you sing Lord Hari's name, feel that the Lord is seated in your heart, that every name of the Lord is filled with divine potencies, that the old, vicious samskara (habits) and vasanas (tendencies) are burnt with the power of the name, that the mind is filled with purity, that rajas (passion) and tamas (inertia) are completely destroyed, that the veil of ignorance is torn down. Meditate on His form and His attributes, then only you will attain the maximum benefits of sankirtan.

Kirtan is singing the Lord's glories. The devotee is thrilled with divine emotion. He loses himself in the love for God. He weeps in the middle when thinking of the glory of God. His voice becomes choked and he flies into a state of divine bhava (feeling). The devotee is ever merged in japa of the Lord's name and describing his glories to one and all. Wherever he goes he begins to sing and praise God. He requests all to join his kirtans. He sings and dances in ecstasy and he makes others dance also.

Such practices should be the outcome of a pure heart; they should not be merely a show. God knows the inner secrets of all. None can cheat him. There should be perfect straight-forwardness. All his actions should be a natural out-pouring from the heart.

This is the easiest of all modes of approach to God. In the Kali Yuga, the Iron Age, kirtan alone is the best yoga. This is the prescribed method of devotion for this Age. The mind that is ever intent upon singing the Lord's names and glories has no occasion to take interest in the things of the world. Day and night the devotee feels the presence of God. This thins out the ego; he becomes satvic and pure at heart.

May you live drowned in the ocean of divine ecstasy, in a fully illumined state, by the regular practice of sankirtan and complete self-surrender to the Lord.

29 MAY - SING WITHOUT CEASING

Akhanda kirtan is to sing the Lord's name without a break. This is a very effective spiritual sadhana (practice). There is eradication of all evil vrittis (thoughts) during this period; the mind has neither time nor opportunity to think of sensual objects during this period. This is an easy way to capture the mind. During this period the mind is filled with satva (purity) and it is filled with supreme peace and joy.

There is no yajna (sacred rite) greater than akhanda kirtan. It is specially suited to this age. It costs you nothing. During akhanda kirtan the maha mantra should be sung. One person should repeat this mantra (formula) in a melodious, sweet voice and all the others should follow him in chorus. The sixteen words, "Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Ram

a Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare" constitute one mantra. Do not repeat or sing either "Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare" or "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare" twice.

For individual japa (repetition) and kirtan (chanting) the whole mantra should be repeated at a stretch. But during akhanda kirtan to avoid too much strain and break, the first half of the mantra may be repeated by the person leading the group, followed by the chorus of the other half. Some people cannot sing even half the mantra without a break. They should train themselves to sing one half without a break in the middle. Especially those who lead the kirtan should take care of this point, otherwise it is not akhanda kirtan.

Open the doors of your heart. Let the lightning spark of love arise in your heart. Let love pierce you through and through. Let heart sing to heart. Let your soul mix with the supreme soul. Let the heart-lotus blossom and waft its sweet divine fragrance. Let the divine thrill strike the strings of your heart. Let the tears flow down your cheeks. Let the divine ecstasy fill your whole being.

Lord Hari is an ocean of mercy. He has boundless love for his devotees. He is the purifier of the sinful and the fallen.

Collect the dissipated rays of the mind. Become serene. Repeat God's name. Your happiness will know no bounds, God will dwell in your heart.

May Lord Narayana take you to his bosom and bathe you in the sacred waters of divine love and transcendental bliss.

30 MAY - FORGET THE BODY

He who does sankirtan (same as kirtan: chanting) forgets the body and the world. Sankirtan brings super-intuitional knowledge. Sankirtan brings darsan (vision) of God or attainment of divine consciousness in this Kali Yuga (dark age). It develops love. It is the easiest, surest, safest, quickest way for attaining God-realisation.

Those who do sankirtan in the beginning, for the sake of mental enjoyment, will realise the purificatory effects of sankirtan after some time and then they will do it with bhava (devotion) and sraddha (faith). There is a mysterious power in the name of the Lord. Man cannot live by bread alone but he can live on the name of the Lord.

The harmonious vibrations produced by the singing of the names of the Lord help the devotees to control their minds easily. They produce a benign influence and elevate the mind at once from its old ruts, to magnanimous heights of divine splendour and glory. If one does sankirtan from the bottom of one's heart, with full bhava and prem (love) even the trees, birds and animals will respond. They will be deeply influenced. Such is the power of Sankirtan It brings the devotee face to face with God.

The individual soul becomes one with paramatma (the supreme soul) only through the process of evolution (ascent through different rungs of the spiritual ladder) by means of nada upasana (contemplation of mystic sound). Nada (sound) is of two kinds - gross or expressed and subtle or unexpressed. The former leads to the latter.

The union of prana with anala or fire, in the human soul, is an indispensible requisite, if the individual soul wishes to unite with Brahman (infinite) or attain the highest (nirvikalpa) samadhi The fire of the muldhara (the lowest psychic centre) represents the RA bija (seed mantra). It ascends to meet the prana from the brahmarandhra (the crown of the head), which represents the MA bija. The combination of RA-MA is the taraka bija (the redeeming seed-mantra) by which the individual soul crosses to the other shore of fearlessness and immortality and attains eternal bliss and supreme joy. Sankirtan is an easy approach to the sukshma nada (subtle sound) and eventually to the divine communion.

31 MAY - THE SUPREME REMEDY

When allopathy, homeopathy, chromopathy, naturopathy, ayurvedapathy and all other 'pathies' fail to cure a disease, the divine namapathy alone can save you. The name of the Lord is a sovereign specific, a sheet-anchor, an infallible panacea and a cure-all for all diseases. It is an ideal or supreme 'pick-me-up' in gloom and despair, in depression and sorrow, in the daily battle of life or the struggle for existence, There is a mysterious power in the name. There is an inscrutable shakti (power) in God's name! All the divine potencies are hidden in the Lord's name. It is the cream or the quintessence of Chyavana-Prasha, Makaradhwaji almonds, Vasanta-Kusumakara or Svarna-Bhasma or gold oxide. It is a mysterious, ineffable divine injection.

You can take this medicine or nama-japa (repetition of God's name) yourself, for curing any disease. You can administer this marvellous medicine to other patients also in your house or elsewhere. Sit by the side of the patient and repeat, with sincere devotion and faith, the name of the Lord, like Hari Om, Sri Ram, Om Namahsivaya, and sing his names also: "Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare; Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare." Pray for his mercy and grace. All maladies and agonies will come to an end. Do the treatment of nama-japa for at least two hours in the morning and evening. You will find the miraculous effect within a short time. Both the doctor and the patient should have perfect faith in the Lord's name, his mercy and grace. The real doctor is only Lord Narayana. Lord Dhanvantari, the physician of the three worlds (who expounded the ayurvedic medical science), has himself declared: "By the medicine of the repetition of the names, Achyuta, Ananta, Govinda, all diseases are cured - this is my definite and honest declaration." In all treatments Lord Narayana is the real doctor. You find that even the world's best doctors fail to cure a dying king. You might have also heard of many instances where patients ailing from the worst type of diseases are cured miraculously, where even the ablest doctors have declared the case hopeless. This itself is clear proof that there is the divine hand behind all cures.

The divine name will eradicate the disease of birth and death and bestow on you moksha, liberation or immortality.

1 JUNE - UNFLINCHING DEVOTION

When you repeat the Lord's name you must evince unflinching devotion from the bottom of your heart devotion to God, without love for any other object. You must drive off all worldly thoughts from your mind. Fill the mind with thoughts of God and God alone. You must struggle. You must exert hard. Remain absorbed in him.

If you love Krishna then love Him alone till the end. Just as you see wood alone in the chair, table, bench, stick, cupboard etc., see the antaratma (the hidden indwelling self) Krishna alone in flowers, trees, fruits, tumblers and all objects. This is ananya bhakti (total devotion). This is para (supreme) bhakti.

Just as you remember all the qualities of your son when you think of his name, so too you should remember the qualities of God - omnipotence, omniscience etc., when you think of his own name.

When you repeat the mantra, have satvic bhava or shuddha bhava (the pure mental attitude). Bhava comes slowly when the purification process goes on. Even mere mechanical repetition has an effect, a very great effect. The vibration in the mind set up by the repetition purifies the chitta (mind-stuff) and brings chitta shuddi (purity of mind).

A beginner should have a japa-mala or rosary. Later on he can take recourse to manasika japa (mental repetition). If a man repeats his mantra for six hours daily, his heart will be purified quickly. He can feel the purity. Have great faith in your guru-mantra (the mantra learnt from your guru) and keep it a secret.

Constant repetition of the mantra with faith, devotion, purity and one-pointed mind awakens the mantra chaitanya (the dynamic consciousness of the mantra), latent in the mantra, and bestows mantra siddhi (perfection or psychic power inherent in the mantra) on the aspirant- illumination, freedom, peace, eternal bliss and immortality. The repetition of the mantra again and again generates a great spiritual force and momentum and intensifies the spiritual samskaras or impressions.

2 JUNE - SINGING GOD'S NAME

Bhakti (devotion) in essence is two-fold. On the one hand there is an intense attachment towards God, nurtured by deep emotion and, on the other, an earnest urge of love for him. When these two elements are combined we find bhakti to be either an attachment emerging out of love or love manifesting' itself as attachment.

The essential feature in bhakti is that this feeling is in relation to the highest - the supreme lovable one who is real and imperishable - and not in relation to the objects of the world that are transitory and therefore unreal. Such love or devotion assumes various forms of expression and goes by different names. Narration in poetry or prose, singing the glory of the Lord, and more popularly, singing the name of the Lord are some of them.

A harmonious, rhythmical note produces a distinctive image. This is not imagination - for every sound there is a particular image. It has been scientifically proved that certain sounds produce certain particular figures over some distinct surface. So it is reasonable to believe that the respective names of God, associated with their respective forms, can also produce their images on the mental surface. Through continuous repetition, the name forms a deep-rooted impression in the mind of the repetitioner, who ultimately attains God-vision.

God and his name are identical and inseparable. He dwells where his name is sung. The whole atmosphere is sanctified by his name - peace, purity and bliss prevail there. His name carries the message of love. His name frees the soul from affliction, unrest and bondage. His name knows no barriers, no distinctions. His name purifies the vicious lower self and elevates it to sublimity, to universal consciousness and transcendent God-head.

Bhajana is meditation on God. Life without bhajana of some sort is useless my dear friends. Life without worship is dull, dreary. It is a mere burden on this earth. All religionists do their own bhajana in their own way. The goal is the same; the paths are different. The object of doing worship is to attain infinite, eternal peace, immortality and freedom from the wheel of birth and death.

3 JUNE - THE POWER OF PRAYER

Prayer elevates the mind. It fills the mind with purity. It is associated with praise of God. It keeps the mind in tune with God. Prayer can reach a realm where reason dare not enter. Prayer can work miracles. Prayer frees the devotee from the fear of death. It makes him feel nearer to God; it makes him feel the divine presence everywhere. Prayer awakens the divine consciousness in him and makes him feel his essential immortal and blissful nature.

Prayer has a tremendous influence. If the prayer is sincere and if it proceeds from the bottom of your heart (antarika) it will at once melt the heart of the Lord. Sri Krishna had to run bare-foot from Dwaraka on hearing the heart-felt prayer of Draupadi. You all know this. Lord Hari, the mighty ruler of this universe apologised before Prahlada for coming a little late, when the latter prayed. How merciful and loving is the Lord.

Say even once, from the bottom of your heart: "O Lord, I am thine. Thy will be done. Have mercy on me. I am thy servant and devotee. Forgive. Guide. Protect. Enlighten." Have a meek, receptive attitude of mind. Have bhava in your heart. Your prayer is at once heard and responded to. Do this in the daily battle of life and realise for yourself the high efficacy of prayer.

Prayer is the first important limb of yoga. Preliminary spiritual sadhana or practice is prayer. God helps even a dacoit (robber) when he prays. Pray to God for purity, devotion, light and knowledge. You will get all these things.

Get up early in the morning and repeat some prayers for getting mental and physical brahmacharya (purity). Pray in any manner you like. Become as simple as a child. Freely open the chambers of your heart. Sincere devotees know well the high efficacy of prayers.

Pray fervently, right now, from this very second. Do not delay friend; that 'tomorrow' may never come. "O Lord, I do not know what I should ask thee. Thou only knowest what I want. I surrender myself unto thee. I open my heart unto thee. Thou art merciful and omniscient. Thou knowest the interior of my heart. Let me accomplish thy will. Make me a fit instrument for thy unhampered play (lila). Prostrations unto thee."

4 JUNE - PRAYER IS SPIRITUAL FOOD

Prayer elevates, inspires, redeems. Through prayer divine grace and divine light descend. Prayer is spiritual food for the soul. Prayer is a spiritual tonic. Prayer is a master-key to open the realms of elysian bliss. Prayer helps the devotee to be in tune with the infinite. Prayer should come from the inner recesses of the heart - then it will be heard at once.

Prayer works wonders. Its power is ineffable. Through prayer the devotee sits by the side of the Lord. Prayer expands and purifies the heart. Prayer is a strong spiritual injection. It fills the heart with immense power and strength. Every religion has its own prayer. Pray in the early morning - it is more effective. Let prayer become habitual pray at all times. Pray not for wealth, position, wife and children, success in lotteries or horse racing - ask for darsan (vision) of the Lord. Pray for devotion and communion.

Recite the beautiful Upanishadic prayer morning and night: "Asatoma sat gamaya, tamasoma jyotir gamaya, mrityorma amritam gamaya" - "lead me on from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from mortality to immortality." During mass prayer a huge spiritual current is generated.

Gayatri japa is a prayer - the devotee asks for illumination of the intellect, so that he can know his real, essential, divine nature. This is an unselfish prayer Mrityunjaya mantra also is a prayer. It is a prayer to the Lord Siva. The devotee asks: "Free me from bondage and death make me immortal."

Om bhur bhuvah svah tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat (Gayatri Mantra)

"Let us meditate on the glory of Ishvara, who has created this universe, who is fit to be worshipped, who is the remover of all sins and ignorance. May He enlighten our intellect."

Om tryambakam yajamahe sugandhim pustivardhanam urvarukamiva bandhanan mrtyor mukshiya mamrtat (Mrityunjaya Mantra)

"We worship the three-eyed one (Lord Siva), who is fragrant and who nourishes well all beings. May He liberate us from death for the sake of immortality, even as the cucumber is severed from its bondage (to the creeper)."

5 JUNE - SELFLESS PRAYER

According to Ghazali, the Muslim, prayer has three stages: verbal, mental and when merging with the Lord's will. At the first stage the devotee sings the glory of God, chants his praises and pours out the anguish of his heart in melodious hymns. Secondly, when the mind becomes calm, when the out-going senses have been restrained by sustained practices, when the mind cannot be easily affected by evil influences, prayer becomes mental. There, no physical effort is needed. At the third stage, when the mind gets concentrated in the divine, when it loses its outward attraction and becomes serene, devoid of desires or cravings, then prayer becomes automatic, natural and habitual.

This is the highest stage - the Lord's will has become his own will. For God, who is invoked by his prayer, merges in his mind and in his will. There is no self consciousness for him - he abides in the Lord - his mind entirely saturated with God. He perceives nothing external nor anything internal. He even forgets that he is praying to the Lord, or that he is absorbed in the Lord's will. There is a vague sense of duality but he has only one experience and that is his oneness with the Lord.

Prayer is full of emotions: deep, serene emotions filled with sincerity. But when there is too much emotion and not so much natural sincerity, then prayer becomes rather jejunical and therefore ineffective. Then we do not receive a direct response from God. Prayer has its consequences. The nature of its response mainly depending on the inner nature of the person who prays - his temperament, his object in view, his requirements, his faith and his sincerity. These are the sine qua non of prayer.

DO YOU WANT GOD?

Do you really want God? Do you really thirst for his vision (darshana)? Have you got real spiritual hunger? You may deliver thrilling lectures on bhakti (devotion), you may write volumes on bhakti - and yet you may not possess a grain of true devotion. He who thirsts for the darshana of God will develop bhakti. If there is a sincere demand for God, then the supply must come. By regular sadhana (practice) may you attain peace, bliss, knowledge, perfection and God-realisation.

6 JUNE - PRAYER

As children we pray to our parents, elders and guardians at the time of our need. We seek their help and guidance. When we grow into adolescence we learn to pray to ourselves - to our latent abilities and strength. We try not to be dependent on others. But there is a limitation to this prayer. So when we feel we are in need of something else, something beyond our capacity, we resign ourselves to God and pray for His help and guidance. Evidently we feel His response - an all-potent inner force that listens to our prayers and fulfils our wishes the moment we are a little sincere and faithful.

As for the devotee, he resigns himself to God; surrendering his ego at His feet. He forgets all about the world and thinks of nothing else but God alone who would surely save him and who alone would be able to help and guide him. He communes his will with God's and acts as per His guidance. There is no sense of individuality or doer-ship in him. He knows that God's will is his will and that he must act up to it. Does that mean that he is devoid of self-effort? Certainly not. For he negates himself and resigns himself to the Lord. To him flows the divine grace instantly. His nature is divinised and so he naturally exerts himself in the right direction. Indeed the very act of self-surrender is purushartha (self-effort) of the highest order.

For the vedantin however, his prayer is essentially the prayer to the self within - to himself- to the cosmic consciousness that is immanent in all. In the initial stage he considers his prayer as a sort of desire - either earthly or spiritual - either with motive or without motive. Then when he advances sufficiently in his sadhana (practice) he considers his (so-called) desire as divine will, which finally opens his intuitive spiritual sight and becomes one with the cosmic will.

The power of prayer is indescribable. Its glory is ineffable. Only sincere devotees realise its usefulness and splendour. Prayer should be done with reverence, faith and non-expectation of fruits. It should be done with a heart full of devotion. O ignorant man: Do not argue about the efficacy of prayer. You will be deluded. There is no arguing in spiritual matters. Intellect is a finite and frail instrument. Do not trust this.

Remove the darkness of your ignorance now, through the light of prayer.

7 JUNE - TEST OF SINCERITY

Essentially, prayer should be selfless as far as possible. We should first pray for the good of others, for the welfare and peace of the world and for our own spiritual evolution. We should pray for the eradication of our evil qualities, for wisdom and knowledge, for goodness and saintliness.

An aspirant should always pray for the removal of his ignorance. His goal is to realise the truth and to free himself from the meshes of those things that are unreal. His goal is to realise his essential divine nature.

At times even sincere prayer is not responded to but this should not be allowed to mar our faith or sincerity or to discourage or depress us. It should be considered as a necessity, as a test of our sincerity, our serenity and our faith in God.

At times this irresponse is often repeated. The devotee becomes bewildered; he begins to lose faith in God; he may even be diverted from the path. Indeed it is here we must show our patience, our steadfastness and our faith in his grace. God often tests us with severest trials but does it mean that he is unkind, that he does not wish to pay heed to our prayers? Obviously not. It is a test that the aspirant must pass through. His faith may not be strong enough; the dross of his mind may not have been cleaned yet; his heart may not be pure yet.

How can the aspirant strengthen his faith? How can he cleanse his mind? How can he purify his heart? Only through tests, trials, tribulations. Just as gold is purified by passing it through the crucible several times, so also the heart must become pure, the faith must become unflinching, through passing through the crucible of trials again and again.

But at the ultimate end all prayers are fulfilled and gratified with the highest fulfilment. Therefore when we pray to God or wish to receive grace from him, we must be prepared to accept joyfully his irresponse and the trials and tribulations.

8 JUNE - SERVICE OF GOD

Padasevana is serving the Lord's feet. Actually this can be done only by Lakshmi or Parvati. No mortal being has got the fortune to practise this method of bhakti (devotion), for the Lord is not visible to the physical eyes.

However, it is possible to serve the image of God in idols and, better still, by taking the whole of humanity as God. Padasevana is service of the sick, service of the poor- service of the whole of humanity at large. Service of the Lord's feet can be done through formal worship to murtis (or idols) or to a mental image of God.

Observing the sacred feet of the Lord, again and again, with devotional and eager eyes, worshipping them, serving them, sipping the sacred water with which the Lord's feet have been washed, worshipping the wooden sandals of the Lord, meditating on them, praying to them, taking the dust of the Lord's feet and applying it to the forehead, washing the heart with the dust of the Lord's feet, respecting the holy shrines and places of pilgrimage and places where God incarnated himself for the good of humanity, regarding the Ganges as directly flowing from the feet of the Lord, worshipping, bathing in and drinking of such divine water of the Ganges - all these are different forms of serving the Lord's feet. This kind of devotion destroys all worldly attachments and allows the mind to think exclusively of God.

Worship God. Praise him. Seek enlightenment. Realise divine bliss. Do not put any conditions to God - worship for worship's sake. In worship the sense of individuality is lost in contemplation of the object worshipped.

To gaze at the divine pictures even for some moments daily is a great blessing. It will purify your mind. Meditation is mental worship of the Lord. Singing the Lord's name (or kirtan) is vocal worship. Service of living beings with love and bhava, is physical worship. If the worshipper of the deity thinks that he is separate from the deity, he is a beast. Devout worship of the Lord's lotus feet means perfect freedom from all fear.

9 JUNE - WORSHIP

An idol (murti or vigraha), sun, fire, water, Ganges, saligram (symbol of Visnu), linga (symbol of Siva), are all symbols of God which help the aspirants to attain one-pointedness of mind and purity of heart. A symbol is absolutely indispensable for fixing the mind. The Christians also have the symbol - the cross. A gross mind needs a concrete symbol; a subtle mind needs an abstract symbol. Even a vedantin has the symbol Om for fixing the wandering mind. In the beginning concentration or meditation is not possible without a symbol.

The mind is disciplined in the beginning by fixing the mind on a concrete object or symbol. Later, when it has been rendered steady and subtle, it can be fixed on an abstract idea such as Aham Brahma Asmi (I am the infinite).

The devotee superimposes, on the concrete idol, the Lord and his attributes. He does sadashopachara puja for the idol - the sixteen kinds of respect or service of the Lord. This consists of paadyam (water for washing the feet), arghyam (water to wash hands), asana (seat), snana (bathing), offering of clothing, applying sandal paste, offering flowers (arcan), burning incense, waving of lights and camphor, food offering (maha naivedyam)etc. The wandering mind is fixed now in this form of worship. The aspirant gradually feels the nearness of the Lord. He attains purity of heart and slowly annihilates his egoism.

He who has done puja (worship) with flowers and other articles of worship for some time, can take to mental worship. In mental puja the devotee offers all offerings to the Lord mentally. This is an advanced form of worship. It purifies the heart and steadies the mind. It fills the mind with pure love for the Lord and gradually transmutes man into a divine being.

Even in worshipping a small idol, he has to repeat the Purusha Sukta (a sacred hymn) and to think of the virat purusha (cosmic form) - with countless heads, countless eyes, countless hands, who extends beyond the universe and also of the Lord or atman who dwells in the hearts of all.

The aspirant gradually begins to feel that the Lord he worships is in the idol, in the hearts of all creatures and in the names and forms of all in this universe. He begins to feel His presence everywhere.

10 JUNE - WORSHIP

One can realise God through worship of murti (or idol). The worship of the Lord in saguna (concrete) form is a great aid for vedantic realisation also, and for the realisation of the Lord in His all-pervading, formless aspect. The worship of the murti is very essential for the purpose of concentration and meditation in the beginning. Such worship is not in any way a hindrance to the attainment of God-consciousness. Those who vehemently attack murti puja (worship) are groping in the darkness of extreme ignorance. They have no real knowledge. They enter into vain debates to show that they are learned persons and have not done any sadhana (spiritual practice). Idle talking is their real profession. They have unsettled the minds of countless persons. The whole world worships symbols and murtis in some form or other. As one advances in meditation, the form melts into the formless and the aspirant becomes one with the formless essence.

Empty vessels only make sound. A practical man who does meditation and worship, who is full of knowledge and real devotion, keeps always silence. He influences and teaches others through silence. He only knows whether a murti is necessary in the beginning or not.

Prasada is 'that which gives peace. During kirtan (chanting), worship (puja, havan and arati), milk, sweets and fruit are offered to the Lord. Puja is done with bael (wood apple) leaves, flowers, tulsi (basil), sacred ash, and these are later given as prasada from the Lord. They are charged with mysterious powers, by the chanting of mantras (sacred hymns) during puja and havan (worship with the fire as the sacred symbol).

Prasada is a great purifier. Prasada is a panacea for all ills; it is a spiritual elixir. Prasada is the grace of the Lord. It is an embodiment of shakti (divine energy). Prasada is divinity in manifestation. Many sincere aspirants get wonderful experiences from prasada alone. Many incurable illnesses are cured by prasada alone. Prasada energises, vivifies, invigorates and infuses devotion. It should be taken with great faith. Those brought up in modern education and culture have forgotten the glory of prasada. Prasada gives good health, long life, peace and prosperity to all. The sacred ash is the prasada of Lord Siva. It is applied to the forehead. Kumkum (vermilion powder) is the prasada of Sri Devi or Shakti. It is applied at the space between the eyebrows.

11 JUNE - WORSHIP

A devotee repeats the mantra (mystic formula) of the Lord during worship and touches his heart, his head, tuft of hair, arms and hands. There is chaitanya (consciousness, power) in every letter of the mantra. Through repetition of the mantra and the touching of the parts of the body with the repetition of the mantra, the aspirant is gradually divinised. There is spiritual awakening. Spiritual currents are generated - tamas (inertia) and rajas (impurity) are destroyed and he is filled with pure satva (purity). He becomes identical with the object of worship. He attains the same world of, or proximity with, or the same form of, or absorption into, the Lord.

For a sage there is no such thing as insentient matter. Everything is Vasudeva or chaitanya. The devotee actually beholds the Lord in the idol. But the worship does not stop there. The sadhaka (seeker) is taken step by step to higher stages of devotion and samadhi (or communion) through the worship of the idol. Though he worships the idol, he has to keep before his mental eye the all-pervading Lord. He has to feel the Lord's presence in his heart and in all objects also.

The ways and rules of worship, described in the Hindu scriptures are scientifically accurate and highly rational. It is only ignorant people who have not studied the scriptures, who have not associated with the devotees and great souls, that vilify worship of idols or murtis.

The aspirant who worships the idol in the beginning, beholds the Lord everywhere and develops para bhakti (supreme devotion); he beholds the whole world as the Lord. All ideas of good and bad, right and wrong, etc., vanish. His vision baffles description. Glory to such exalted devotees who are veritable gods on earth, who live to lift others from the quagmire of samsara (world-existence) and save them from the clutches of death.

Tulsidas realised the all-pervading essence. He had cosmic consciousness. He communed with the all-pervading, formless Lord. And yet his passion for Lord Rama, with bow in hand, did not vanish. When he went to Brindavan, and saw the murti of Lord Krishna, with flute in hand, he said: "I will not bow my head to this form". At once the form of Lord Krishna assumed the form of Lord Rama. Then only Tulsidas bowed his head. Mira also realised her identity with the all-pervading Krishna and yet she never tired of repeating, again and again, "My Giridhar Nagar".

12 JUNE - PROSTRATION

Vandana is prayer and prostration. Humble prostration - touching the earth with eight limbs of the body, with faith and reverence, before a form of God, or prostration to all beings, knowing them to be the forms of the one God, getting absorbed in divine love of the Lord - is termed prostration to God.

The Bhagavatam says: "The sky, air, fire, water, earth, stars, planets, cardinal points, trees, rivers, seas and all living beings constitute the body of God. The devotee should bow before everything in absolute devotion, thinking that he is bowing before God Himself."

Sri Krishna says to Uddhava: "Giving no attention to people who laugh in ridicule, forgetting the body, and insensible to shame, one should fall prostrate on the ground, bowing to all beings even down to the dog, the cow and the ass." Doing prostrations to others makes a man humble.

If a man entertains Narayana bhava (feeling the presence of God in all) when he does prostrations, this will help him to realise that whatever he sees is God, that there is nothing but God, that the manifestation is the virat (cosmic) aspect of Brahman. This will help to develop devotion. Always feel that you are prostrating to the Lord himself - all living creatures, all objects are forms of God only.

May you all attain God-consciousness through the practice of prema (love) yoga. May your heart be filled with prema for the Lord. May the blessings of the Lord be upon you all. May you shine as bhagavatas, singing the Lord's name, disseminating divine prema and radiating joy, peace and bliss everywhere:

SIVA'S FINAL TEACHING

Purify your heart through selfless service,
Be devoted to the Lord and obtain his grace,
Through japa (repetition of God's name),
kirtan (chanting), prayer and self-surrender.
Practise asanas (postures), pranayama (yoga breathing), etc.
Abandon egoism, desire, anger and greed.
Control all the senses.
Cultivate discrimination and dispassion.
Practise the four means.
Hear the srutis (scriptures).
Reflect and meditate ceaselessly.
You will attain self-realisation.

13 JUNE - GOD AS MASTER AND FRIEND

Daasya bhakti is love of God as the servant of God. To serve God and to carry out his wishes - realising his virtues,. his nature, his mystery and his glory and considering oneself as a slave of the supreme master - this is daasya bhakti. Serving and worshipping the murtis (images) in the temples, sweeping the temples, meditating on God and serving Him like a slave (mentally), serving the saints and the sages, serving the devotees of God, serving the poor and the sick, is also included in daasya bhakti.

To follow the words of the scriptures, to act according to the injunctions of the vedas considering them to be direct words of God, is daasya bhakti. Association with and service of love-intoxicated devotees and service of those who have knowledge of God, is daasya bhakti. The purpose of this is to be ever with God, in order to offer your services to him and win his divine grace and thereby attain immortality.

Arjuna prays with the sentiment of a servant and a disciple in order to get the grace of Lord Krishna: "O Lord: I am your disciple. I have taken refuge in you. Teach me." The aspirant should completely give himself up to God and should not retain any personal reservations. Ananya bhakti is total relinquishment of the self to God.

Sakhya bhava is the cultivation of the friend-sentiment with God. The Bhagavatam says: "Oh how wonderful is the fortune of the people of Vraja, of cowherd Nanda, whose dear friend is the perfect, eternal Brahman or absolute bliss."

To be always with the Lord, to treat him as one's own dear relative or friend, belonging to one's own family, to be in his company at all times, to love him as one's own self, is sakhya bhava of bhakti-marga (the path of devotion). The devotee takes up with eagerness any work of the Lord, leaving aside even the most important and urgent and pressing personal work, and totally concerning himself with the love of the Lord. How do real friends love in this world? What an amount of love passes between them. Such love is developed for God - physical love is turned into spiritual love. There is a transformation of the mundane into the eternal.

It is a great pity that sakhi bhava (the attitude of God's beloved) is misunderstood. The jiva chaitanya (individual soul) is the real sakhi. Sakhi bhava is purely an internal state, not a mere external show. The individual soul is united with the supreme soul by self-surrender. The lover and the beloved become one. This is the acme of bhakti. This is the culminating point. Bhakti begins with two and ends with one.

14 JUNE - THE NATURE OF SURRENDER

In atma nivedana (self-surrender) the devotee offers everything to God, including his body, mind and soul. He keeps nothing for himself. He has no personal, independent existence. He has become part and parcel of God. God takes care of him and God treats him as Himself. Grief and sorrow, pleasure and pain, the devotee treats these as gifts sent by God and does not attach himself to them. He considers himself a puppet, as an instrument in the hands of God. He does not feel egoistic for he has no ego - his ego has gone over to God.

This devotee does not feel it is his duty to look after his wife, children etc., for he himself has no independent existence apart from God. God will take care of all for He knows how to lead the world in the right path. He has no sensual craving, for he has no body; it has been offered to God. He only feels the presence of God and nothing else. He has no enemies or friends for he has given himself up to God who has no enemies or friends. He has no anxiety for he has attained everything by attaining the grace of God. He does not even have the thought of salvation - he merely wants God and nothing but God.

This devotee is satisfied with the love of God, for by that there is nothing that is not attained. What is there to attain when God has sent his grace upon the devotee? The devotee does not want to become sugar but to taste the sugar - there is pleasure in tasting sugar but not in becoming sugar itself. So the devotee feels that there is supreme joy more in loving God than in becoming God. "I am Thine", says this devotee, knowing that God will take complete care of him.

Mira abandoned everything. She renounced her kingdom, husband, relatives, friends and property. She remembered Lord Krishna all day and all night. She shed tears of love (prema). She sang His name with devotion. She gave up eating food and her body became emaciated. Her mind was ever absorbed in Lord Krishna. Only then did Lord Krishna shower His grace upon her.

15 JUNE - SURRENDER

Surrender is ishvarapranidhana. The devotee consecrates all his works and their fruits to the Lord. He has no will of his own. He says unto the Lord, "I am thine. All is thine. Thy will be done. Thou art just. Thou doest everything for me. I am an instrument in thy hands."

In surrendering one's will to the Lord, his will becomes one with the cosmic will. He becomes one with the Lord. There is no loss in surrendering one's will to the Lord.

Self-surrender is atma-nivedana, or prapatti. This is the highest bhakti (devotion). The gopis of Vrindavan, Radha and Mira surrendered everything at the feet of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna was their all. In Kathopanishad it is said, "The Lord chooses that man who has surrendered himself, reveals himself unto him and bestows the highest wisdom on him."

The two obstacles to self-surrender are egoism and desire. Egoism and desire wage guerilla war. They assume various forms and assail the devotee again and again. Be on the alert. Be ever vigilant. Slay the egoism and desires beyond resurrection. Then alone will you be safe.

Your sadhana shakti (ability to practise) is grace of the Lord. Guru is grace of the Lord. Sticking to the spiritual path is grace of the Lord. Progress in sadhana is grace of the Lord. Revelation or intuition is grace of the Lord. Descent of divine light is grace of the Lord. Human birth is Lord's grace. All sorts of aids to sadhana you get such as kutir (cottage), food, clothing, medical aid, good place for meditation, books, satsanga (good company), etc., are his grace only.

It is difficult to eradicate the self-assertive nature. Every man has built his personality from the beginning of time. He has allowed the rajasic (impure) mind to have its own way. This personality has grown very strong, it is hard to make it pliable and elastic. The self-assertive man wants to dominate over others; he does not want to hear the opinions of others, even though they may be sound, logical and tenable.

16 JUNE - I AM THINE, O LORD

Do not bother about taking care of your body. God will save it if he needs it for further service. Surrender it at his feet and rest in peace. He will take care of it. A real devotee says, "Let me take millions of births; it does not matter, but let me be attached to the lotus-feet of Lord Hari. Let me have spontaneous devotion to the Lord. Let me be endowed with purity, spiritual strength, the spirit of selfless service and other divine virtues."

If you simply say, without real inner feeling, "I am thine, O Lord," this will not constitute real integral self-surrender. This should come right from the core of your heart. You must be prepared for a radical change. You should not stick to your old habits, ways and motives. You should not expect that everything should happen in the way you want. You should live to carry on the divine purpose. You should not think of those ambitions which the mind likes to gratify. You should not think of using divine grace or the divine force for your own purposes - then the irrepressible ego will assert itself in various ways and refuse to give up its old habits.

The ego tries to get everything from the divine but it totally declines to give itself to the divine. That is the reason why aspirants do not make any substantial progress on the spiritual path even after doing sadhana (spiritual practice) for several years.

There is no loss in self-surrender. You get from the Lord everything. You enjoy all the divine aisvarya (wealth of divine attributes) of the Lord. The whole wealth of the Lord belongs to you. Siddhis and riddhis (psychic powers) will roll under your feet. You become one with the Lord. You are freed from all wants and desires and cravings. The spiritually hungry and the really thirsty aspirant who yearns for the vision of the Lord, turns towards the divine and is quite willing, eager and happy to consecrate his body, life and mind and soul at the feet of the Lord.

The first stage of self-surrender is only a firm resolve to surrender oneself to God, or to his preceptor. A sadhaka (seeker) who has dedicated his life for the service of his teacher or the service of humanity or for attaining self-realisation, is not bound by the actions he performs subsequent to his self-surrender. Self-surrender becomes perfect only after God-realisation.

17 JUNE - GOD-REALISATION

Divine love overflows to others once it has filled your heart. Love God with all your heart and your - neighbour as yourself - this is the secret of God-realisation. Love breaks down all barriers. Love is an open sesame to an infinite realm of bliss immortal. The learned talk of God but the poor love Him in their hearts.

Beyond logic, beyond intellect, beyond reason is the feeling of love and the embodiment of love - which is God. Argue not. Realise Him. Talk to Him with the language of the heart.

Do not gauge the Lord's love and mercy by the material prosperity He gives you. Infinitely more valuable is the spiritual treasure He bestows upon His true devotee. Love is the dew-drop of divine grace.

Cosmic love is the threshold to the limitless domain of Brahmic bliss. Cosmic love is synonymous with supreme self-sacrifice or egolessness. In all beings lives the one God, - the supreme being, the eternal Lord. Therefore bow to all beings with reverence, faith and devotion.

Feel that another's difficulty is yours and relieve him of his difficulty. Then alone you will grow in cosmic love. Love is an actual substance that you can use with confidence. Love is a positive, concrete thing.

Love vibrates in the form of service, charity, generosity and benevolence. There is unity of life. Love of one's self is the true love of all life. All patriotism, love of one's own nation, one's own race, one's own religion, are but limited kinds of love. Human love is but the stepping-stone to divine or universal love.

Love all. Behold the one common consciousness that indwells all beings, that is immanent in all names and forms. Spread the message of divine love, light and worship wherever you go. Love knows no fear. Love is the greatest power.

Love is the divine force of this universe. The purer you make your heart, the greater will be the power of your love. Be kind, be compassionate, be humble, be tolerant, be good, be just, be natural. Love the eternal in every being. Make no distinctions between one being and another.

18 JUNE - SUPREME LOVE IS SELF-KNOWLEDGE

A devotee of para bhakti type is all-embracing and all-inclusive. He has cosmic love and the whole world is holy for him. He does not visit temples for worship, seeing the Lord in everything. He feels that the world is a manifestation of the Lord, and that all movements and actions are his sport. He has no dislike for faecal matter or dirt, for the outcaste, the scavenger, the cobbler, the beggar, the prostitute, or the thief. He says: "I see my sweet Lord everywhere. It is Hari who is playing the part of the prostitute, the thief, the dacoit, the scavenger:" He has an all-embracing, all-inclusive, exalted mental state. This cannot be described adequately in words, but must be felt. Mira, Gouranga, Hafiz, Tulsidas, Kabir. Ramdas - all enjoyed this state.

Namdev said to the dog: "O Vitthala, my dear, in the form of a dog, do not run away with the dry bread. It will affect your soft throat. Pray let me apply ghee (clarified butter) to the bread." He ran with ghee in a cup to the dog. Sri Ramakrishna prostrated before an outcaste girl: "O Mother Kali, I see thee in this girl." Eknath, a Maharashtrian bhakta, gave his ring voluntarily to the thief when the latter entered the house. "O thief: Take this ring also. Your duty is to steal things. Thou art Krishna. Keep up this sport." Have you understood the sublime state of these exalted bhaktas who had a new angle of vision? A day will come to you also. Exert and struggle.

Para bhakti is self-knowledge only. Sri Sankara, who was established in the wisdom of pure non-dualism, was a great bhakta of Lord Hari and Devi. Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Kali and obtained self-knowledge through Swami Totapuri, his guru. Appayya Dikshitar was a devout bhakta of Lord Siva. Para bhakti and self-knowledge are one. The only slight difference is that a bhakta uses his emotion, while a sage of wisdom uses his will and intellect. Bhakti begins with love, while jnana or self-knowledge begins with thinking and self-analysis. The end of both is the same, union with the divine.

19 JUNE - GRACE PURIFIES THE HEART

Behold the Lord's grace in every inch of his creation. On a hot summer day you enjoy the delicious sweet juice of grapes, cucumber, oranges and pomegranates and the cool Ganges water of Rishikesh and Hardwar. This is the Lord's grace. When you suffer from a serious ailment you get immediate relief and cure from herbs this is the Lord's grace. When you walk in the dark night, the stars twinkle and throw light on your path - this is the Lord's grace. When you are unable to bear extreme pain you become unconscious - this is the Lord's grace. When the weather is sultry, a gentle breeze springs up and refreshes you - this is the Lord's grace.

The subtle forms of lust, anger, egoism, pride, etc., can only be totally destroyed through the grace of the Lord. However hard you may strive and do sadhana (spiritual practice), these subtle forms cannot be eradicated through your sadhana alone. Only the Lord's grace completely purifies your heart.

It is the Lord's grace only that stirs the aspirants to do right exertion. But do not sit idle and say: "Oh the Lord's grace will do everything for me, why should I do sadhana?" This is wrong philosophy. God helps those who help themselves. God's grace will only descend on those persons who exert themselves. You cannot expect the Lord to do self-surrender for you. Be up and doing. Strive. Plod. Persevere. The Lord will shower his grace upon you.

It is the grace of the Lord that gives rise to sincere satsankalpa (good and true thoughts and pure resolves). You can be transformed in the twinkling of an eye. One moment you may be groping in the darkness, the next moment you can attain illumination.

There is an ignition point of the soul. When it is connected, man is transformed. His life is turned from its former worldly ways into a new divine life. He is awakened spiritually.

This serenity will deepen into unshakable peace amidst all the troubles and difficulties of life. Then only insight and intuition will dawn. Then only you will attain wisdom, perfection and freedom.

20 JUNE - THE DEVOTEE'S VISION

The bhakta is blissful at all times. His mind cannot think of anything for everything is God. "Yatra yatra mano yati tatra tatra samadhayah - Wherever the mind goes there it experiences samadhi" - for it does not find any object of enjoyment. God fills every speck of space and the whole world is clothed in the glory of God.

The saint and the sinner, the virtuous and the vicious, the good and the bad, the man and the animal, all are forms of God. How can the mind deal with them in any undivine way? There, the mind experiences samadhi it has consciousness but no object. Samadhi is thoughtless consciousness, objectless consciousness - this is para bhakti. This is the same as vedantic realisation. The effect is the annihilation of the ego or the destruction of the mind.

God, who is supremely powerful, supremely wise and supremely blissful, pervades the entire atmosphere and the earth. He is the earth and the heaven; He is father, mother, brother, sister; He is the consummation of all love and aspiration, of all desire and ambition; He is the stoppage of all mental vrittis and He is the ideal to be attained.

Control the mind and annihilate the ego - this is the essence of all yogas. It is the ideal of bhakti yoga, which is a very sweet and easy method or procedure. One has not got to curb one's emotions and one has not to run away to the forests. He has to direct his emotions towards God. He has to see God as present in the world. This is the essence of bhakti sadhana (practice).

Bhakti is thus only a reflection of the love for the self which the Upanishads declare. Only the names are different: one calls it self and the other calls it God. Names do not matter; it is the feeling that counts, and that is the same in both.

Self-surrender is the highest form of bhakti. It is surrender of the ego or individuality. What remains after that is the 'absolute' of the vedantins. Bhakti surrenders the ego and a vedantin disintegrates the ego. In both the ego is not there - their ideals are the same. Whether one eats rice or wheat, it is all the same - the purpose of both is to appease the hunger. So whether you follow bhakti or vedanta, the effect is the annihilation of the ego. This is the truth.

21 JUNE - SUPREME LOVE OF GOD

Life is complex nowadays. The struggle is very keen. Here is an easy way of worshipping the Lord.
Consider your house as the temple of the Lord.
Your wife and children and others as the holy company of the bhaktas (devotees).
Consider every word you speak as the japa (repetition) of the Lord's name and as praise of him.
Consider every action as service of the Lord.
And your lying in bed as prostrations before the Lord.
And your daily walk and moving about, as perambulations of the Lord.
Consider the lights you burn in the evening as the waving of lights to the Lord.
Consider sleep as samadhi (superconscious state).
Give food and drink as offering to the Lord, then take it as his prasad (gift).
This is an easy way to worship the Lord.

"How shall I wash thy feet with holy water, O Lord, when the very Ganges flows from thy feet?
How shall I give thee a seat O Lord?
Thou art all-pervading!
How shall I wave lights for thee O Lord?
The sun and the moon are thy eyes: Shall I offer flowers to thee?
Thou art the very essence of the flowers."

This attitude is called para-puja (highest worship).
Feel the presence of the Lord everywhere.
He dwells in the chambers of your heart too.
He glitters in your eyes.
He is the breath in your nostrils.
He is nearer to you than your jugular vein.
Behold Him in every face.
You will attain happiness here and hereafter if you worship God in this way.
Life is short and time is fleeting.
Start doing this right now.

Why should you roam hither and thither to find God, the supreme being? Why should you go in vain to the forests? Why? Even as in the flower, fragrance resides, even as in the fire, heat dwells - even so doth the Lord abide. Seek Him within, my friend. Seek Him earnestly too.

22 JUNE - SEEK GOD WITHIN

Seek God within you, in your heart. Seek him not elsewhere. Seek him with faith. Seek not God for favours. Such favours will not bring you near to God. Cultivate niskamya bhakti (motiveless devotion) - pine for his grace and mercy. Quicken and enliven your faith in God. Let the flame of faith grow brighter and brighter daily. Feel His presence everywhere. Obtain His grace through faith, devotion and total self-surrender.

Cling to the feet of the Lord. Lead the life divine. Roll the beads and mentally repeat his name. Sing his praises and remember Him at all times. Fix your mind on the lotus-feet of the Lord at all times. See the Lord in all objects. Sing the Lord's names.

Meditate on His form first then meditate on His all-pervading essence. Withdraw the senses from their objects and gaze within. Concentrate on the heart - search for Him there.

Practise ahimsa, satyam and brahmacharya (non-violence, truth and purity). Say from the bottom of your heart, "I am thine. Thy will be done O Lord." Stick to dharma (right conduct). Control the mind and the senses. Kill egoism, lust, greed, hatred, etc.

Serve the saints. Serve your guru - guru and God are one. Chant the name and praises of the Lord. Meditate on His divine attributes. Constantly remember the Lord and His presence. Serve and worship the Lord. Cling to the name of the Lord. Practise the religion of sacrifice. Dedicate yourself to God. Walk in humility and love. This is the way to God-realisation.

Here are some auxiliaries to bhakti. Study the lives of saints, again and again. You will get new inspiration and you will be elevated, renovated and transformed.

Japa (repetition of God's name), kirtan (chanting), prayer, service of saints, meditation, smarana (remembering God), are aids to God-realisation. Shun evil company. Live in the company of saints. Serve the sick and the poor. Lead a simple life.

Cultivate divine virtues such as humility, tolerance, mercy, kindness, courage, selflessness, cosmic love, truthfulness, purity and celibacy.

23 JUNE - UNIVERSAL LOVE

The only sara-vastu (thing of value) in this world is prema (or divine love). It is eternal, infinite and undecaying. Physical love is moha (passion or infatuation). Universal love is divine love. Cosmic love (visva prema) and universal love are synonymous terms. God is love. Love is God. Selfishness, greed, egoism, vanity, pride and hatred contract the heart and stand in the way of developing universal love.

Develop universal love gradually through selfless service, satsanga (association with holy ones), prayer, recitation of guru-mantra (mantra or a holy word given by a guru), etc. Thus all barriers are broken and now the heart will expand infinitely.

It is very easy to talk of universal love. But when you want to put it into actual practice it becomes extremely difficult. Petty-mindedness of all sorts comes in the way. Old, wrong samskaras (impressions) which you have created by your wrong mode of life in the past, act as stumbling blocks. Through iron determination, strong will-power, patience, perseverance and vichar (right enquiry), you can conquer all obstacles quite easily. The grace of the Lord will descend on you if you are sincere, my dear friends!

Feel that the whole world is your body, your own home. Melt or destroy all barriers that separate man from man. Any idea of superiority is ignorance or delusion. Develop all-embracing love. Unite with all. Separation is death. Unity is eternal life. Feel that the body is a moving temple of God. Wherever you are, whether at home, at the office, the railway station or the market, feel that you are in this temple.

Consecrate every act as an offering unto the Lord. Transmute every work into yoga by offering its fruits to God. Have akarta-sakshi-bhava (feeling: "I am a non-doer, witness") if you are a student of vedanta. Have nimittabhava (feeling: "I am an instrument") if you are a student of bhakti. Feel that all beings are images of God, that this world is indwelt by the Lord. Feel that one power, or God, works through all hands, sees through all eyes, hears through all ears. You will become a changed being. You will enjoy peace and bliss.

May Lord Hari take you all to His bosom and bathe you with the waters of sweet love: May your heart be filled with cosmic love.

24 JUNE - THE DIVINE SECRET

True wisdom is love. The way is only one - love divine - that is all. Love divine is a great power; it is the basis of all religious life. Divine love has no sex. It sees God in all and all in God. Where love is, there God is. From love the world is born, by love it is sustained and into love it enters. He who loves not, knows not God, because God is love.

Open the floodgates of your heart for the inpouring of love divine. The path is through love - every moment of separation is a pang of death to the lovers and the devotees. Day and night the flame of love burns in the hearts of the devotees. Solace comes to the devotee in the flow of tears. The creeper of love is nourished by the eyes.

Love is not a passing sentiment or a feeble emotion - it is strong, deep, enduring. There is real love only when there is true inward identification with the life of another entity. Pure love divine communes with the beloved, with unity, with the one, the all-pervading essence of bliss.

The most important aspect of spiritual life is bhakti (devotion), and the secret of bhakti is love, a love which embraces all. Company of saints, kirtan (chanting) of the Lord's names, study of the Bhagavatam and service of the saints will create love for the Lord.

Love of the body or skin is passion. Love of God is prema (or devotion). It is pure love, love for love's sake. To love someone for attaining a selfish gain, is selfish love. It binds you to this earth. To love all beings, as manifestations of the Lord himself is pure love and leads to liberation. Pure love redeems and purifies the heart and transmutes you into divinity. God is an embodiment of love - an ocean of love. If you wish to attain God-realisation you must also become an embodiment of love. Love inspires, illumines and leads the way. Love is giving and not taking. Love cements the broken heart. It is the key to open the door to moksha.

Love inspires love. It is divine elixir; it bestows immortality, supreme peace and everlasting joy. Love is the golden link which binds heart to heart, mind to mind and soul to soul. Love never reasons but ever profusely gives. It is not affected by offence or insult. It looks only with the heart.

25 JUNE - SONG OF IMMORTALITY

Ram Ram Ram Ram, Jaya Sita Ram Jaya Jaya Radheshyam.
Turn the gaze, draw the indriyas,
Still the mind, sharpen the intellect;
Chant Om with feeling, meditate on atma,
Chant Ram with feeling, meditate on Sitaram,
Chant Shyam with feeling, meditate on Radheshya,
O children of light, will you drink not,
Won't you drink not, the nectar of immortality? (Ram Ram…..)
All karmas (are) burnt now,
You have become a jivanmukta,
That blessed state turiyatita
No words can describe,
O children of light, will you drink not,
Won't you drink not, the nectar of immortality? (Ram Ram…..)
The grass is green, the rose is red,
And the sky is blue,
But the atman is colourless,
Formless and gunaless too,
O children of light, will you drink not,
Won't you drink not, the nectar of immortality? (Ram Ram…..)
Life is short, time is fleeting,
The world is full of miseries,
Cut the knot of avidya,
And drink the sweet nirvanic bliss,
O children of light, will you drink not,
Won't you drink not, the nectar of immortality? (Ram Ram…..)
Feel the divine presence everywhere
See the divine glory all-round,
Then dive deep into the divine source,
Realise the infinite bliss,
O children of light, will you drink not,
Won't you drink not, the nectar of immortality? (Ram Ram…..)
Do asana kumbak, mudra,
Shake the kundalini;
Then take it to sahasrar
Through cakras in the sushumna,
O children of light, will you drink not,
Won't you drink not, the nectar of immortality? (Ram Ram…..)

26 JUNE - SONG OF GOVINDA

God is truth Govinda
God is bliss Govinda
God is peace Govinda
God is knowledge Govinda
God is love Govinda
God is light Govinda
Control the mind Govinda
Control the senses Govinda
Realise the self Govinda
This is the teaching Govinda
Of all the scriptures Govinda
Goal of life Govinda
Is God-realisation Govinda
Practise ahimsa Govinda
Speak the truth Govinda
Serve, love, give Govinda
Be good, do good Govinda
Be cheerful Govinda
Be courageous Govinda
Be patient Govinda
Be forgiving Govinda
Be moderate Govinda
In everything Govinda
Be regular Govinda
Get up at 4 a.m. Govinda
Enquire who am I? Govinda
There is no pleasure Govinda
In the sensual objects Govinda
Study daily Govinda
Gita, Upanishads Govinda
Do not smoke Govinda
Do not drink Govinda
Do not take bribes Govinda
This is bad Govinda
Time is precious Govinda
Do not waste a second Govinda
Utilise it Govinda
In japa, kirtan Govinda
In meditation Govinda

27 JUNE - SONG OF VIBHUTI YOGA

Bhajo Radhe Krishna, Bhajo Radhe Shyama
Soham Soham, Sivoham Soham.
Om Om Om Om Om, Om Om Om Om Om.
I am neither mind nor body, immortal self I am,
I am witness of three states, I am knowledge absolute. (Om Om.....)

I am fragrance in jessamine, beauty in flowers,
I am coolness in the ice, flavour in coffee. (Bhajo Radhe Krishna...)

I am greenness in the leaf, hue in the rainbow,
I am taste-buds in the tongue, essence in orange. (Om Om.....)

I am mind of all minds, prana of all pranas,
I am soul of souls, self of all selves. (Bhajo Radhe Krishna...)

I am atman in all beings, apple of all eyes,
I am sun of all suns, light of all lights. (Om Om.....)

I am Pranava of all vedas, Brahman of Upanishads,
I am silence in forests, thunder in all clouds. (Bhajo Radhe Krishna...)

I am velocity in electrons, motion in science,
I am effulgence in the sun, wave in the radio. (Om Om.....)

I am support of this world, soul of this body,
I am ear of all ears, eye of all eyes. (Bhajo Radhe Krishna...)

I am time, space, dik and the controller,
I am God of gods, guru and the director. (Om Om.....)

I am melody in music, in rag and raginins,
I am sound in ether, shakti in virya. (Bhajo Radhe Krishna...)

I am power in electricity, intelligence in mind,
I am brilliance in fire, penance in ascetics. (Om Om.....)

I am 'reason' in philosopher, 'will' in jnanis,
I am prem in bhaktas, samadhi in yogis. (Bhajo Radhe Krishna...)

I am That I am, I am That I am,
I am That I am, I am That I am. (Om Om.....)

28 JUNE - THE SECRET OF YOGA SADHANA

I solemnly affirm that the disease of birth and death can be removed only through the divine panacea of mind-mastery; not through any other means. The path of annihilation of the mind will be most beneficial to you and will never generate the least of pains. If the mind is destroyed by dint of discrimination, then maya (illusion) will not afflict you. There is no other vessel on this earth to sail the ocean of rebirth, than mastery of this turbulent mind.

Tame the mind. Collect your thoughts. Keep the mind serene. Think not of evil. You will enter the realm of deathlessness, dominion of eternal bliss. Withdraw the senses from their objects. Collect the rays of the mind. Direct the mind towards the ajna cakra (or the space between the eyebrows) and fix it there steadily.

Understand the mind; know how to manage it. Mind abhors a vacuum. Aversion and desire, both are binding two monkeys sitting on the tree of the heart. While they continue to shake and agitate it there can be no peace.

Man falls into the cycle of births and deaths through his own thoughts, his own ignorance. Liberation means nothing but the destruction of the impurities of the mind. If your mind is free and pure, you will not again enter into birth.

Control of the mind is not done in a day but by constant practice and sustained dispassion. Victory will be yours. Become a true hero. Have mastery over the mind. Enter the illimitable realms of bliss. Blessed is he who has controlled his mind and achieved self-conquest.

Dispassion, discrimination, renunciation and meditation are enemies of the mind. You can destroy the mind easily, if you possess these virtues. The mind manifests itself as the external world in the shape of pain and pleasure. The mind subjectively is consciousness, while objectively it is this universe. The mind has the potency of creating or undoing the world in the twinkling of an eye.

29 JUNE - THE SOURCE OF THE MIND

Creation, preservation, destruction, veiling and blessing are God's five kinds of actions. God is the ruler, the knower of the heart, and the prompter. He helps the student in a variety of ways - through dreams, the inner voice, talking through the mouths of others in conversation and in advice from friends.

Eternal bliss, supreme peace, eternal satisfaction, infinite happiness and unbroken joy can be had only in God. Attain God-consciousness or self-realisation through exclusive devotion to one aspect of the Lord, or by self-enquiry.

When, by analysing your own mind, you come face to face with something which is never destroyed, something which by its own nature is eternally pure, perfect, self-luminous and unchanging, you will no longer be miserable or unhappy. The nature of Brahman is sat-chidananda (existence-knowledge-bliss absolute). What limits the individual soul's vision? It is only the mind.

Between the atman (self) and the organs of the senses, a connecting link is necessary. We acknowledge the existence of an internal organ, the mind, through which perception takes place. If we do not admit the internal organ, there would result either perpetual perception or perpetual non-perception.

Perception results when there is conjunction of atman, the sense and the object (these are the three instruments of perception). If this effect did not follow, perpetual non-perception would take place.

Neither is the case however. We have therefore to acknowledge the existence of an internal organ, on whose attention and non-attention perception and non-perception take place. This is the argument for the existence of the mind. Mind is nothing but a collection of impressions. It is a bundle of habits. It is a collection of desires arising from contact with different objects. It is a collection of feelings aroused by worldly botherations; of ideas gathered from different objects. These desires, ideas and feelings change constantly. Some of the old desires and feelings are constantly departing from the store-house, the mind, and being replaced by new ones. This constant change does not in any way interfere with the harmony of mental operations.

Some ideas and feelings depart and those that remain work in healthy co-operation with the new arrivals. They work in harmony and this harmony sustains the identity of mental existence.

30 JUNE - MIND IS ALL

Mind alone is the whole world, with its pains, old age, death, sin, earth, water, fire, air and ether, and all the internal organs. Mind binds man. He who has controlled his mind is a veritable god on earth. We live in a world of thoughts. First there is the thought and then there is the expression of that thought through the organ of speech.

Thought and language are intimately connected. Loving thoughts uplift and encourage others. Unkind thoughts, thoughts of anger, bitterness and malice injure others. Thoughts are things. Sound, touch, taste, form and odour, the waking, dream and deep sleep states - all are the products of the mind only.

Thoughts such as passion, anger, bondage, time - know all these to be the results of the mind. The only true laboratory is the mind. Study it, test it and then go beyond it. Then you will realise the truth; then you will discover the hidden soul. Only if your mind is quiet will you enjoy peace in your own home, as you will enjoy it in the forest.

Man has a mind. But mind is not man. Mind is a good servant. It is an instrument only. Utilise it tactfully and properly. The prime requisite for happiness is control of the mind or lower self. Your thought is imprinted on your face. Mind is a bridge that connects the human with the divine.

Your body, your business, your house, are all only ideas within your own mind. Thought is a dynamic force. Good thought is the first perfection; it is the real wealth. Emotion is the driving force at the back of the mind. Will-power is the master key to success. Knowledge, thought, intellect and reason are one.

Appetite, instinct, impulse and desire are one. Emotion, ambition, spirit and courage are one. The mind is the master of the body. The soul is the master of the mind. Thou art, in essence, immortal soul. Thou art above body and mind. Always remember this supreme fact and live in the awareness of thy spiritual nature.

1 JULY - MIND AND MATTER

Mind is not a gross thing, visible and tangible; its existence is nowhere seen; its magnitude cannot be measured; it does not require space in which to exist. Mind and matter are two aspects or subject and object of one and the same all-full Brahman - who is itself neither and yet includes both.

Mind precedes matter; this is the vedantic theory. Matter precedes mind; this is the scientific theory. Mind is immaterial only in the sense that it has not the characteristics of ponderable matter. It is not immaterial in the sense that Brahman - pure spirit - is.

Mind is the subtle form of matter. Hence it is the prompter of the body. Mind is made of subtle, pure (satvic), atomic matter. Mind is all electricity. It is formed of the subtlest portion of food. The soul is the only source of intelligence; it is self-evident; it shines with its own light.

The organs or mind and senses derive their principle of activity and life from the soul. By themselves they are lifeless. Hence the soul is always the subject and never the object. Mind is the object of the soul.

It is a cardinal principle of vedanta that that which is an object for a subject is non-intelligent. Even the principle of self-consciousness is non-intelligence - it does not exist by its own light; it is the object of apperception to the soul.

Mind is composed of coarse or fine matter, according to the needs of the more or less unfolded consciousness connected with it. In the educated it is active and well-defined. In the undeveloped it is cloudy and ill-defined.

Absolute consciousness is common to all. It is one. All the workings of the mind are presented to the one common consciousness which is the witness of the mental vrittis. It is the mind that limits man, who is in reality, identical with Brahman.

This identity is realised when the veil of ignorance is removed. For Brahman, the mind is an object of perception. Atman directly cognises all the phenomena of the mind - desires, imagination, doubt, belief, shame, intellect, fear, etc., - and yet remains quite unattached and unaffected.

2 JULY - THE MIND BECOMES THE BODY

The body with its organs, is no other than the mind. The physical body is the outward manifestation of the mind. Mind is the subtle form of the physical body. The mind, contemplating on the body, becomes the body itself. Then, enmeshed in it, is afflicted by it. All bodies have their seat in the mind. Should the mind be paralysed, the body will not evince any intelligence.

The mind performs all actions very speedily in the linga sarira (subtle body) and fluctuates thereby. But the gross body knows not anything and is inert. Should this gross body be dissolved, the mind quickly assumes a fresh body. This physical body is the mould, as it were, of the mind. It is made by the mind for the outpouring of its own energy, for its own enjoyment. Thereby it gains different experiences of this world through the organs of knowledge or perception.

The body is really our thoughts, moods, convictions and emotions objectivised, made visible to the naked eye. Every cell in our body suffers or grows, receives a life impulse or a death impulse, from every thought that enters the mind. You tend to grow into the image of the thing you think about most. When the mind dwells on a particular thought, a definite vibration of matter is set up. This tends to repeat itself, to become a habit.

The body follows the mind and imitates the changes. Every change in thought makes a vibration in your mental body and this, when transmitted to the physical body, causes activity in the nervous matter of the brain. And this activity in the brain and nerve cells causes electrical and chemical changes in the body.

Vedanta also adds : "See and feel Brahman everywhere. ignore the names and forms." This teaches you to develop atma bhava (feeling that the self is all) or Brahma bhava (feeling that Brahman is all) by vichara (enquiry) and right thinking and meditation.

When an idea exclusively occupies the mind, a mental state or bhava, corresponding to the nature of the idea comes in. Think of your enemy - the inimical bhava will manifest. Think of mercy and universal love - prema (love) bhava or karuna (compassion) bhava will manifest. Think of universal service - seva (service) bhava will manifest. Think of Lord Krishna and his lilas - Krishna-prema bhava will manifest. Feeling always accompanies thinking it is like fire and heat - inseparable.

3 JULY - HOW TO CULTIVATE RIGHT THINKING

Every thought has an image, form, dimension, weight, shape, colour, etc. Thought is as much matter as a piece of stone. A table is a mental image plus some external something. Whatever you see outside has a counterpart in the mind. The pupil is a small round thing in the eye and the retina is another small structure in the eye. How is it that the image of a big mountain, seen through that small aperture, is cast onto the mind? How does the big form of the mountain enter a tiny hole in the eye? This is a marvel of marvels. The image of the mountain already exists in the mind. The mind is like a big, vast sheet of canvas cloth that contains all the pictures of the objects seen outside.

Thought moves and passes from one man to another. Thought readily influences people. A man with strong thoughts can readily influence people with weak thought. Telepathy is a branch of occult science wherein the yogi can transmit messages to any man in any part of the world. A thought of anger or hatred sends arrows from the mental factory towards the person aimed at. It harms the individual, sets up discord and disharmony in the thought world and comes back again to the sender and harms him also. If one can understand the effect and power of thought, he will be more careful in the manufacture of his thoughts in his mental laboratory.

Develop the faculty of producing only satvic (pure) thoughts by protracted mental discipline, dietetic adjustments, repetition of good hymns with meaning, good company, the study of divine books, japa (repetition of God's name), meditation, pranayama (yoga breathing), prayer, etc. A good man can help his friend, even though he lives a long way away, by good thoughts alone. Do not allow evil thoughts to enter your mental factory. Always watch your thoughts. Avoid useless thinking. Conserve your mental energy.

To cultivate sublime thoughts always keep yourself occupied in doing virtuous deeds and in the study of religious books. Destroy random thinking. Think of only one subject and its different aspects. When you do this never allow any other thought to enter the conscious mind. Again and again withdraw the mind to the subject on hand. Then take up another thought when you have exhausted the previous one.

By this practice you will develop organised thinking. The mental images will gain intense strength and force; they will become clear-cut and well defined. In ordinary persons the mental images are undefined.

4 JULY - ON VRITTI

The mind stuff is chitta. It is a mental substance. Vritti or thought-wave is a modification of the mind-stuff. It is a process. Just as waves and bubbles arise from the surface of the ocean, so also these vrittis arise on the surface of the mind-ocean. Just as the sun's rays emanate from the sun, so also these mental rays (modifications of the vritti), emanate from the mind-sun. Just as the sun merges itself into the horizon at sunset, by collecting all its rays, so also you have to merge in the sun of suns, absolute consciousness, eternal peace, by collecting all the dissipated mental rays and dissolving the mind itself.

The function of the vritti in the mind is to cause the removal of the cause of ignorance covering objects. Gross ignorance is enveloping all objects. When it is removed, then perception of objects becomes possible.

Through its own effort the mind assumes the shape of any object, and concentrates upon itself. When the mind thinks of Brahman, the sole ultimate thought of Brahman is formed. Be vigilant. Watch the mind and its activities. The object does not bind you - it is the vritti, the identification with the vritti, that causes attachment and bondage.

If you become one with the mind, body and vrittis you get various sorts of miseries and sufferings. The whole universe is created by the vrittis alone. If these mental thought-waves subside you can attain the absolute state of highest peace and bliss. Just as soap cleanses the physical body, even so japa (repetition) of any mantra, dhyana (meditation) and kirtan (chanting), together with the practice of yama and niyama (discipline), cleanse the mind of all impurities. Just as you nourish the physical body with food, even so you will have to give food for the mind and spiritual food for the soul.

Only when the modifications cease do you enter the silence. Realise this. Close the eyes, draw in the senses, still the mind, silence the thoughts, sharpen the intellect, purify the chitta, meditate on Om and chant it with feeling. Enter the silence. Silence is atman, the centre - it is in the heart-cave. When the mind runs from one object to another, the state in the interval, wherein you become mindless, is Brahman.

5 JULY - WAVES OF GANGA

Experience is never possible without consciousness. Anything that is eternal must be infinite and unlimited. Consciousness is unlimited; the consciousness of limitation shows that consciousness is greater than limitation. Perfection is the attainment of immortal life or pure consciousness. The enquiry of, "Who am I?" leads to self-realisation (Brahma-jnana). Divine wisdom can be attained only by those who are endowed with purity. Tear the veil. Realise the reality.

Pain is the effect of not having what is wanted, or having what is not wanted. Brahman is secondless. There is no pain or want in Brahman. Therefore pain is impossible in the absolute. Contact is the mother of pain. The absolute can have no contacts and therefore no pain. Brahman is free from all wants and desires because it includes everything in itself. Therefore it is an embodiment of bliss.

Bliss is not an attribute. It is the very constitutive essence of the self, or atman. As the self is absolute in nature, its bliss is also absolute. This is the same as Brahman.

Annihilate the ego. Reach the goal here and now. Take the inner essence and attain perfection. Relax not the keen vigilance against your most subtle foes - egoism and desire. Where can you see the Lord? I found the Lord where 'I' did not exist.

Where there is no sense of 'I', there is liberation. It is bondage to have the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. Identify with the all-pervading soul (atman). You will attain immortality. This is the secret of eternal life.

With the growth and expansion of your inmost being, you attain greater perfection and fulfilment of yourself, and bliss is the result thereof. Purge yourself from self-seeking and egoism. Escape from space-time limitations. Lose all sense of separateness. Unite with Brahman or the absolute. The practice of the presence of God will cause the ego-veil to dissolve.

Divine love will now manifest and eternal bliss will flow in. The Lord's grace is ever upon sincere, selfless souls.

6 JULY - HOW IMPRESSIONS ARE FORMED

An experience in the sense plane sinks into the depths of the subconscious mind. There it becomes a samskara (an impression). The impression of an experience is formed, in the chitta, (subconscious mind), at the very moment that the mind experiences it. There is no gap between the present experience and the formation of the samskara in the subconscious mind.

One specific experience leaves one specific samskara and the memory of this specific experience springs from that particular samskara only, which was formed out of that particular experience.

When you first perceive an orange and taste it, you get knowledge of an orange. A samskara is formed in the subconscious mind at once. At any time this samskara can generate a memory of the object, the orange and knowledge of the orange. Though the object and the act of knowing are distinguishable, yet they are inseparable.

Samskara is also known as 'residual potency'. When all vrittis or thoughts die away, the frame of the mind remains, with the samskaras. This is termed the 'potential mind'. All samskaras co-exist in the mind. Vrittis slowly subside, leaving traces in the mind. These traces are samskaras. From them springs memory.

If you have yogic vision, you can vividly notice the marvels that take place in the mental factory of an individual. You can see how the vritti arises in the mind-lake. You can see how it subsides. And you can see how a samskara is formed. You will be struck with wonder. Samskaras are like forces they either aid or inhibit one another.

The sum total of all samskaras is known as karmaashaya (receptacle of works) and this is called sanchita karma (accumulated works). When a man leaves the physical body he carries with him his astral body of seventeen tatvas (elements) and the karmaashaya, to the mental plane. Karmaashaya is burnt in toto by the highest knowledge, obtained through asamprajnata samadhi (the non-dual superconscious state).

7 JULY - UTILISE THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

The mental processes are not limited to the field of consciousness alone. The field of subconscious mentation is of a much greater extent than that of conscious mentation. Messages when ready, come out like a flash from the subconscious mind to the surface of the conscious mind, through the trap-door in the subconscious mind. Only ten per cent of the mental activities come into the field of consciousness. At least ninety per cent of our mental life is subconscious.

We sit and try to solve a problem. We fail. We look around. We try again and again but we fail. Suddenly the idea dawns that leads to the solution of the problem. The subconscious processes were at work. The subconscious mind is your constant companion and sincere friend. Even in sleep it works without rest. It arranges, classifies, compares, sorts the facts and figures and works out a satisfactory solution.

With the help of your subconscious mind you can change your vicious nature. By cultivating healthy, virtuous qualities you can overcome the vicious nature. If you want to overcome fear, mentally deny that you have fear. Concentrate your attention on the opposite quality, the ideal of courage. When courage is developed, fear vanishes by itself. Positive overpowers negative. You can establish new habits, new ideas, new tastes and new character in the subconscious mind, just by changing the old ones.

All actions, enjoyments and experiences leave their impressions in the subconscious mind, in the form of subtle impressions or residual potencies. Samskaras are the root cause for life and the experience of pleasure and pain. Revival of samskaras induces memory. The yogi dives deep inside and comes in direct contact with these samskaras. He directly perceives them through inner yogic vision. When you desire to remember something you have to exert. You have to go down to the depths of the subconsciousness and then pick up the right thing from a curious mixture of multifarious, irrelevant matter.

8 JULY - CHANGE YOUR HABITS

Mind is a bundle of habits. Bad habits and prejudices, hidden in one's nature, will be brought to the surface of the mind when the opportunity comes. If you change the habits you can also change your character. You sow a habit and reap a character. You sow a character and reap a destiny.

Habits originate in the conscious mind but when they become established, by constant repetition, they sink into the unconscious mind and become our 'second nature'. Habit can however be changed by a new, healthy, agreeable habit, of a stronger nature. At present you are thinking, "I am the body". Think, "I am Brahman". In the course of time you will be established in Brahmic consciousness.

Do not be a slave to one idea. Whenever you get new, healthy ideas, the old ones must be given up. In the mind there is an internal fight ever going on between 'nature' and 'will', between the old, worldly habits and the new, spiritual habits. In the case of aspirants, the fight is between the old samskaras of the sensual world and new, spiritual samskaras. It is a fight between the good impressions of the past and bad impressions of the past. It is a fight between viveka (wisdom) and instinctive mind and indriyas (senses).

Eventually will, which is pure, strong and irresistible, is bound to succeed. There is no doubt about this. As your reason grows and you become wiser and wiser - by study, by contact with the wise and by meditation - your mind must be well prepared to take up new, healthy, rational ideas and eschew the old, morbid ones. Mind is your tool. When emotions arise, separate them, study them, analyse them - but do not identify yourself with them. Master your impulses, emotions and moods. Rise from the position of slave to that of a spiritual king.

Just as the repetition of a thought or action leads to perfection, so also does the recurrence of the same process, or the same idea, lead to the perfection of abstraction, concentration and meditation.

Give your full mind to God. Only then will you have realisation. Even if one ray of the mind runs outside, it is impossible to attain God-consciousness. You cannot enjoy peace of mind, you cannot practise meditation, if there is tossing of the mind. Destroy mundane desires through dispassion and surrender to the Lord.

9 JULY - MENTAL FACTORY

Now I will take you to the most wonderful mental factory. It is very close to you; it is a wonder of wonders. Even a rank materialist, if he is very sincere, will be turned into a perfect theist, instantly, if he closes his eyes for a moment and seriously reflects on the working of this marvellous factory. The Kena Upanishad opens with the following lines : "Who is the director of this mind? Who gives light and power to this mind?" It goes on "Brahman is the mind of minds, the prana (life) of pranas, the eye of eyes, the ear of ears."

What a bold philosophy. At once it raises man to an unerring solution for all the different problems of life. The four mahavakyas (great utterances): "Prajnanam brahma (consciousness is the absolute); aham brahma asmi (I am the absolute); tat twam asi (that thou art); ayam atma brahma (the self is the absolute); infuse power and joy into the hearts of all hearers. They produce drastic changes in your life. Then you will laugh at the vain pomp, the empty glory and the artificial and miserable life of a rich man.

The eyes and the ears are the gate-keepers of this mental factory - they are the 'way in' and mouth is the 'way out'. Eyes and ears bring inside the mental factory matters for manufacture. Light and sound vibrations are brought inside through these two avenues. First of all they are made into 'percepts' by the mind. They are then presented to the intellect. The intellect converts these 'percepts' into 'concepts' or ideas. These ideas are expressed by the outside gatekeeper, the organ of speech.

The external physical eyes and ears are mere instruments. But the real visual and auditory centres are in the brain and in the astral body - these are the real senses. Understand this point well. The intellect receives these materials from the mind and presents them to the purusha or atman (the self), who is behind the screen.

The mind is the head clerk of this mental factory. He has ten clerks, the five jnana indriyas (senses) to bring news from the facts outside. The facts are placed by the mind before the intellect, who places them before the purusha (inner self). A message comes back from the purusha to the buddhi (intellect). Buddhi decides and determines, and then gives the answer back to the mind, for execution. The five karma indriyas (organs of speech, hands, feet, genitals and anus) execute the order of the mind who is their master.

10 JULY - THE INNER INSTRUMENT

Antahkarana (the inner instrument) is a broad term which includes mind, intellect, memory and egoism (ahamkara). The one antahkarana assumes different names, just as the same man assumes the name of judge when he works as a judge in the law courts, or president when he serves in a society or association, and store-keeper when he is in charge of the stores.

When you walk through a mango garden, the will and doubt are done by the mind - it thinks whether the mango is good or not. The intellect comes to its aid; it determines that the mango is 'good'. Then the chitta (mind-stuff) finds out how to ,get hold of some of the mangoes from the gardener. Ahamkara self-arrogates. It demands the mango at any price. The mind executes this order by passing it to the feet (karma indriya) to take the man to the gardener. Ahamkara buys the mango and eats it. The impressions of the mango remain in the mind and the vasana (tendency) is formed in the mind. The thought of enjoyment comes to the mind later on. And this, through memory (in the form of a subtle vasana) produces thought (sankalpa) and troubles the man again and again, to enjoy the mango.

This cycle: desire, thought, action, goes on from eternity to eternity. This brings bondage to man. When the vasana is repeated several times it becomes a strong passion. Then the man is a slave of the passion and indriyas (senses). A strong sense-hankering is called a trishna. The difference between desire and vasana is that the vasana is subtle and hidden in the subconscious mind, whereas the desire is gross. The pleasure derived from the enjoyment of the object brings attachment in this mind. Attachment is moha. The man who is attached to objects, who is full of sense-vasanas, is tied to those objects. Escape becomes nearly impossible for him. Escape is possible only by destroying these knots, by knowledge of the witness, the director of this mental factory, who has kept up this show inside.

If you can clairvoyantly visualise the inner working of this mental factory you will be dumb-founded. Wake up from this long slumber of ignorance. Purify, meditate and attain wisdom And roam about happily. ---So says Sivananda

11 JULY - MORE ON THE INNER INSTRUMENT

If you can clairvoyantly visualise the inner working of this mental factory you will see that, it is like a big telephone exchange, the messages come from diverse houses and firms into the central exchange. The operator plugs, connects and disconnects the various switches. So too, the mind plugs, connects and disconnects. When you want to see something the mind puts a plug into the other four senses (centres of hearing, smelling, taste and feeling). When you want to hear something, the mind plugs into the other four centres.

The mind functions at an unimaginable speed. There are numberless pigeon-holes in the subconscious mind where various sorts of things are recorded in perfect order. There they are classified, grouped, labelled with accurate precision. One impression rises up as a thought-wave and comes to the surface of the mind. It tickles the jiva (individual) into action. You can also see various colours in thoughts - spiritual or holy thoughts are tinged with beautiful yellow colour. If there is thought of anger, dark red arrows shoot out from the mind. There is perfect order in the cosmos - the working is smooth and harmonious because there is the antaryami (inner controller) behind it, directing and guiding. In the mere presence of the inner ruler, the indwelling, interpenetrating presence, the mind and other inner faculties work without any friction.

There are different regions for sentiments, emotions, instincts, impulses. There are highlands and lowlands in the mind. There is the spiritual plane and there are the planes of the instinctive mind and the intellect. On the one side the will steps in to execute a certain strong desire of the mind. The other faculties, such as memory and the power of judgement and reflection stand behind, in a disciplined array, to help their master, the will. After the will has executed the order, imagination comes forward and speculates. Memory helps imagination.

Then the three gunas (qualities of nature), the various modes, and the thirteen evil vrittis (lust, anger, etc.), show their faces in different colours. They come to the scene, do their work and then retire for a rest. Words cannot describe how thrilling this scene is. Develop this clairvoyant astral sight through purification and concentration.

Do not forget the inner ruler who is awake even when the mental factory is closed down temporarily. Purify the mind. Practise concentration. Develop the power of the mind. Eventually you will merge with him.

12 JULY - SUBTLE DESIRES

The summum bonum of existence is the attainment of knowledge of the self, the realisation of the one homogeneous self. The knowledge of the self can only dawn when there is extinction of all the vasanas. Vasanas are subtle desires; they are gross in nature. Some philosophers define vasanas as tendencies or inclinations. Others say they are blind clinging to sensual objects, through intense longing or craving, without deliberation or thinking.

There are two kinds of vasanas - the pure and the impure. Pure vasanas liberate one from rebirth. Impure vasanas cause the mind to fluctuate, producing agitation in the mind and affinity for objects. If you are led by pure vasanas, you will soon attain the immortal seat of ineffable splendour. The vasanas generated by you in past lives will cling to you in future births. But if pure vasanas cling to you, you will easily attain knowledge of the self, and through this you will attain liberation. If the impure vasanas cling to you, you will experience pain and sorrow; you will get rebirth in this world, again and again.

The tree-mind has two seeds - one is vasana and the other is the fluctuation of prana (life). The seeds produce a big tree and the tree again produces seeds. So also the vibration of prana arises through vasana and the vasana operates through the movement of prana. If either perishes, both soon perish.

Egoism is the first asuric (demoniac) son of avidya (ignorance). Egoism has two asuric daughters - raga and vasana. There is an intimate connection between vasana and raga. Raga is attachment. Mamata (mine-ness) is due to raga. If you want to kill raga and vasana, you must annihilate egoism. If you want to kill egoism you must first kill avidya. Destroy avidya first - raga and vasana will die by themselves.

Mind is the cause for bondage and freedom. A mind filled with impure vasanas leads to bondage, whereas a mind destitute of vasanas tends to freedom. When mind is no-mind (through destruction of vasanas), then you become mindless. When you become mindless, intuition dawns and you are endowed with the eye of wisdom. You will enjoy indescribable peace.

13 JULY - WORLD OF OPPOSITES

One thing, which is sweet and pleasant to you at one moment, produces the very reverse sensation in another moment. Who has not experienced this, in this world of opposites? Objects when longed for are pleasant but are bitter if not longed for. Hence vasanas (tendencies) are the cause of sensual pleasures. Pleasures will stop when you get satisfaction in them but if vasanas cease, the mind will perish and all else will be destroyed. Therefore annihilate these vasanas, the enemies of atma-jnana (self-knowledge) and immortality.

The mind clings to sensual objects. If the vasanas perish, the mind ceases thinking of objects and we attain the state of thoughtlessness. You will have a balanced mind despite adverse circumstances and many obstacles. Vasanas perish through dispassion, discrimination, control of the senses, enquiry of, "Who am I?" and meditation.

The impure vasanas perishist and resist. They lurk in the corners of the mind in a mysterious manner. They play tricks on you. They can change their colours like a chameleon. Under pressure of yogic practices they get suppressed for some time but if you are not regular in your meditation, if vairagya (dispassion) wanes, they will attack with redoubled force. You must have a sharp intellect to detect their presence. Vasanas have arisen through enjoyment in many thousands of lives. They are very potent. They only perish through protracted spiritual practices - japa (repetition of God's name), kirtan (chanting), meditation, self-enquiry, discrimination, sama (control of mind), dama (control of senses), pratyahara (withdrawal of the mind) and pranayama (yoga breathing).

You have to transmute the impure vasanas into pure ones, through constant effort. Change the current of impure vasanas and allow them to run in the channel of pure vasanas. But pure vasanas are also fetters, golden fetters. You have to destroy the impure vasanas with the help of pure vasanas - then you have to abandon these pure ones also. Desire for liberation (moksha vasana) also must die eventually. Then only you become that.

Separate yourself from the objects. In the absence of objects the 'I' does not exist; and these objects do not exist in the absence of 'I'. Have the strong conviction that 'I' does not belong to the objects, that the objects do not belong to the 'I'. Identify yourself with the infinite 'I' (the satchidananda Brahman) - and abandon the burden of the physical body. Become a videha mukta (liberated and bodiless) - all burdens will perish now.

14 JULY - MY TASK IS COMPLETE

My purpose is achieved. The entire circle of birth and death is over. I have realised the perfect bliss of the atman. I have known myself to be Brahman. I am free. I am perfect. I am independent. I enjoy bliss. I enjoy the bliss of the immortal soul.

I am brimful of perennial joy. A self-effulgent light burns in my heart. I have broken all illusory relationships. Now there is no husband, no wife. Now there is no cousin and no grandfather. It is all one homogeneous essence of bliss only. Now my task is complete.

I am free from doubt. I am free from delusion. Why should I study the scriptures? I rest in my own essential nature. Now, where is the necessity for meditation? I act like any other human being. I bathe, I sleep, I sing, I answer the calls of nature, I work, I write, I walk, I eat and I talk. And yet, I do not perform any action at all.

I am the witness of all these processes. I am identical with Brahman. These acts are not obstructions to me. All these dealings are perfectly harmless. I am not susceptible to vikshepa (the disturbance of the equilibrium of the mind).

Where is the necessity for samadhi for me? Vikshepa and samadhi are functions of the mind only. I have obliterated the mind. I am continuously experiencing the satisfaction which results from samadhi.

Let people have any opinion of me. Let them glorify me. Let them vilify me. It matters little. "Sivoham. Sivoham. Sivoham. Sivah Kevaloham."

I have risen above ignorance. I have risen above my knowledge of this seeming universe. It is not only escape from misery and grief. I enjoy the joy eternal, the joy unspeakable, the joy supreme, the joy unbounded.

What is this joy that I feel? Who shall measure it? I know nothing but joy limitless and unbounded.

15 JULY - GUIDE TO SADHAKAS

The first thing a spiritual aspirant has to acquire is mastery over the mind. Like a blind man - look at the objects. Like a deaf man - hear sounds. Do not allow the sense experiences to penetrate within. The mind gets fattened on account of its being fed by sense objects. Restrain the senses by the process of pratyahara (abstraction).

Why should you struggle to curb the mind? Its power is far greater than any other power, but it will become your slave if you surrender to the Lord and allow his divine power to work through you. The control of prana (life force) should be the natural and unfailing duty of all spiritually minded persons. It is the control of prana which paves the way for the non-cogitation of all the externals and the conquest of death.

Firmness of practice in the stainless non-dual principle, control of prana and the subjugation of the mind - these three are the paths to realise the meaning of moksha. Out of these three, one should be mastered thoroughly. Then the effects of all three will be obtained as all three are inseparably related to one another.

If the mind and prana cease to exist then thoughts will cease to arise - both of these are one only like the flower and its fragrance, or a seed and the oil in it. Prana and mind stand to one another in the relationship of supporter and supported. If either of them is slain then the other also will cease to exist. The destruction of both will confer moksha.

Spiritual life begins with repentance. Spiritual life begins with aspiration. Genuine aspiration is the pre-condition of success in leading a spiritual life. Aspiration is indeed the fruit of good actions of the past. Guard your spiritual aspirations very carefully. Increase them through viveka (wisdom), sadvichara (pure enquiry) and satsanga (holy company).

Devotion to God and guru, practice of discipline, regular meditation - these will quickly lead to self-realisation. Selfless work is for the purification of the mind. Self-realisation is brought about by discrimination, dispassion, determination and meditation. He who is faithful to truth and who diligently practises meditation, turning inwards in meditation, is put upon the ultimate path which leads to self-realisation.

16 JULY - NIRODHA

Mind and breath are like milk and water. Raja yoga is control of the mind. He who wants to become a perfect yogi and wants to experience wonderful samadhi (superconscious state), must control mind and breath. He must continuously practise yoga and observe the rules. He must thoroughly overcome the five tatvas (elements).

Restraint of the mind (nirodha) leads to jnana. Nirodha is the culmination of yoga and sankhya (two paths to liberation). It is nirodha which underlies all sadhana (spiritual practice). Restraint of the mind is the essence of all worship. This is jnana (wisdom) and dhyana (meditation). The highest is attained by the restraint of the mind. The mind should be completely restrained from objects until it attains dissolution in the heart.

Atman or Brahman is your immortal self. It is the only blazing reality. Only if you know this Atman can you attain perfection. Perfection can be yours in this very life. Atman is to be recognised as your innermost being, through samadhi.

If you know the atman, which is the ultimate reality, which is perfection, then only your life becomes useful and a real existence. The knower of the atman, the inner perfection, crosses all sorrows and becomes free. If you do not know this atman then there is great loss for you.

Samadhi is not a mere emotional enthusiasm or an exhilaration of feeling, it is the direct, unique, intuitive experience of truth or absolute consciousness or the ultimate reality. It is beyond all feeling, throbbing and thrill. The aspirant rests in his centre now - the goal of his search - and realises the absolute freedom, independence and perfection.

The aspirant should have a burning desire to free himself from the fire of samsara (worldly life). Then only he will be able to enter into deep meditation and samadhi. The mind becomes that very Brahman when it is purified and brought into the samadhi state. In samadhi there is no perception of duality, the cause of fear. Avidya (ignorance) is entirely absent in this state.

To attain supreme bliss, you must have patience, perseverance, diligence, serenity, purity, one-pointed mind and burning aspiration. He who does not strive for realisation lives in vain - though he is a man in appearance, he is in fact a beast.

17 JULY - TRUE RENUNCIATION

The mind is the all in all. Its mastery leads to the renunciation of all. True renunciation is in the abnegation of the mind. It consists in renouncing all desires and egoism, not world existence. Through such mental abnegation you will be able to free yourself from pain. Then will come immortality in life - the enjoyment of the infinite delight of existence free from ego, founded on the oneness of all in Brahman.

Sanyasa (renunciation) is a mental state only. It is gerua (or colouring) of the heart and not of the cloth alone. He is a sanyasi who is free from passion and egoism, who possesses all the satvic qualities, even though he lives with the family and in the world. If you have a stainless mind you are a sanyasi (a renunciate), whether you live in a forest or in a city, whether you wear white cloth or an orange coloured robe, whether you shave your head or keep a long tuft of hair.

Shave the mind. This consists of getting rid of all attachment, passion, egoism, infatuation, lust, greed, anger, etc. Vedanta does not want you to renounce the world; it wants you to change your mental attitude. It wants you to give up this illusory feeling of 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'.

Mind is a mass of objectified desires. Desire in the mind to eat, has manifested as the tongue, the teeth and the stomach. Desire in the mind to walk has manifested as legs and feet. Control the mind and you control the desires. Eyes can only see. Ears can only hear. Tongue can only taste. Nose can only smell. Skin can only touch. The five senses are blended in the mind and the mind directly sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels. It does this quite independent of the senses.

Understand clearly the aim of your life. Chalk out the line of work that is congenial to your aim. Then you should work hard to realise that ideal. Have your ideal ever before you and try, every second, to live up to it.

Develop a strong desire to remove carelessness and forgetfulness from your character. Have confidence in your own powers and faculties. Keep your mental poise in the world, without consideration of failure, without consideration of gain or loss, pleasure or pain.

Have the mind always rooted in God, amidst all the activities of life.

18 JULY - FASTING OF THE HEART

Form the habit of deep introspection. Good aspirants who enter into deep meditation also march forward in sleep. Taking food immoderately or at the wrong time will affect your system and render meditation difficult. Lead a life of self-restraint and back it up with meditation, japa (repetition of God's name), pranayama (yoga breathing) and asanas (postures). Fasting is beneficial. You can meditate well and seriously while fasting. The most significant fast is the fast of the heart - that is, renunciation of desires.

The mind may fall into a state of inactivity and the aspirant thinks he has reached the goal. This is a sad mistake. Divest yourself of anger, greed and attachment to sensual objects and their enjoyments. Be free from 'love' and 'hate' of others. Divest yourself from all affinities for objects. Follow proper diet, easy posture, purity of mind and body.

If the steps are not steady on the path, do more japa, intensify your vairagya (dispassion), sit in one place and meditate. Serve. Have unshakable faith in the Lord. Cling to the Lord's divine name. Surrender to the divine Lord. Pray to him sincerely. The mind will be powerless. Hand over charge of your body to the Lord and cease to think of it. The Lord is everywhere. He controls everything. He will protect you from all danger.

Rely on the Lord alone. If you put into practise one hundredth of what I say to you, you will surely attain God-realisation now and here.

A great emperor purchased a horse for ten thousand rupees. The horse was restless and no one was able to ride it. Then his son Sikandar said, "Beloved father, I can ride this horse". He sat on the horse and rode it in the direction of the sun. The horse galloped. The emperor was quite astonished. He said, "O Sikandar: How did you manage to ride this horse?" Sikandar replied, "The horse was afraid of his own shadow so I made him run towards the sun". Such is the restless horse-mind also. If you turn it towards atman (self) it will be peaceful. If you turn it towards maya (delusion) it will jump and dance.

9 JULY - TREACHEROUS MIND

Mind is very treacherous. It will hurl you down into the abyss of ignorance. It will say: "Pitva pitva punar pitva punar janma na vidyate". (Drink, drink again, there is no rebirth). It will say: "Give up sadhana (spiritual practice), you will not gain anything. There is no bliss beyond the senses. The world is real, there is nothing like sensual pleasure, enjoy it to your heart's content."

Hear not this voice of the mind. Swim against the mind-current. Mind is your bitter enemy. Disconnect your self from the mind - stand as its silent witness. Do not become one with the mind and the senses. Practise introspection and self-analysis. Thus will the mind gradually be tamed. It will become your obedient servant.

Sensual pleasures are nectar in the beginning but they are venom in the end. Here is a way to thin out the mind, a way to control it. If the mind says, "Eat eggs and meat", eat only spinach, fruits and milk. If the mind says, "Read novels and newspapers", read only the Gita, the Upanishads and practise karma yoga. If the mind says, "Gamble; practise vigil and do kirtan the whole night.

O truant mind: O mischievous imp! I am tired of giving you admonitions. You are like the shameless son-in-law who sits idly in the house of his father-in-law, eating and drinking, and bearing all the rebukes and broom beatings it is difficult to control the mind without the grace of the Lord. The prompter of thoughts alone can subjugate this wild mind. My prostrations and adorations to the prompter!

Listen O mind, to this piece of advice. Sink not in the mire of samsara (worldly life), in the perilous ocean of births and deaths. Mix thou not in mundane affairs. Eat not the fruits of pain and sorrow. Take not birth again and again. Wither not thyself in wicked deeds. Is not eternal bliss thy quest? Commune with the Lord of bliss now. Forget the body and its connections and rest peacefully in blissful joy. Abide in thy supreme abode. Now there will be an end of birth.

Desire not name, fame, prestige, position, title, honour, rank. Care not, O mind, for earthly affection, love and kind words, respect, nice clothes and dainty dishes, the company of damsels and their talk. Remain steadfast. Gaze on the Lord dwelling in the cave of thy heart - He who is thy refuge, thy solace, source and centre, the witness and the abode, the Lord and dissolution.

20 JULY - CURE FOR MENTAL DEFECTS

There are three defects of the mind. They are; impurity, tossing of the mind, and the veil of ignorance. The mind is tossed about among objects of love and hatred like a light feather in a stormy wind. It whirls far and wide among sensual objects, far away from the association of the wise. It is like a strolling city dog. This baneful mind whirls at the sight of immense wealth and it follows its mate, desire, and ever preys upon ignorant worldlings as it would on a carcass.

The mind is characterised by excessive fluctuation. It is fluctuating and confused. It rejoices in vain. It is intoxicated with egoism. Through this fluctuation the mind becomes a prey to fear. Remove these three doshas (defects).

To do this you should study the mind. Analyse the mind. Purify the mind. Dissolve the mind in God, by constant and intense thinking about God. Practise the sadhana (endeavour) of destruction of the mind. Rise above deceptions of the mind. Rise above the temptations of the mind. This is your duty. You are born for this only. All other duties are self-imposed, self-created through ignorance.

Mind is made pure through true, pure and virtuous actions, by constant association with the wise. Mantra, repeated with the right feeling, produces a wonderful effect on the mind. Right thinking, noble emotions, prayers, regular and strenuous meditation are the means to improve the mind.

As a result of purification of the mind, the mind becomes more sensitive. It is easily disturbed by sound or shock. It feels any pressure acutely. The aspirant must be sensitive and yet have the body and nerves completely under his control. He must get over this sensitivity.

O mind, you cannot be my friend now - I know your worth and nature. Till now I was deluded by your tricks. But now we move in diametrically opposite poles. You want fleeting sensual pleasure from objects. I want immortal bliss of the soul inside. You are ever restless and worried. I am peaceful and tranquil. You are full of passion, fear and attachment. I am dispassionate, fearless and unattached. You want woman, wealth, property. I am full of renunciation. We cannot agree at all. Therefore leave me quickly and quietly. Goodbye, friend.

21 JULY - DISCIPLINE OF THE MIND

You must have a pure mind if you want to realise the self. Unless the mind is free and it casts away all desires, cravings, worries, delusion, pride, lust, attachment, likes and dislikes, it cannot enter into the domain of supreme peace and unalloyed felicity, the immortal abode.

A glutton or a sensualist, a dullard or a lazy man, cannot practise meditation. He who has controlled the tongue and other organs, who has an acute acumen, who eats, drinks and sleeps in moderation, who has destroyed selfishness, lust, greed and anger, can practise meditation and attain success in samadhi (superconsciousness).

You cannot enjoy peace of mind, you cannot practise meditation if there is vikshepa in your mind. Vikshepa is tossing of mind. Vikshepa is rajas (passion); vikshepa and desires co-exist in the mind. If you really want to destroy vikshepa, you must destroy all mundane cravings through dispassion and self-surrender to the Lord.

If you apply fire to green wood, it will not burn; if you apply fire to a piece of dried wood, it will at once catch fire and burn. Even so, those who have not purified their minds will not be able to start the fire of meditation. They will be sleeping or dreaming building castles in the air - when they sit for meditation.

But those who have removed the impurities of the mind by japa (repetition of God's name), service, charity, pranayama (yoga breathing) etc., will enter into deep meditation as soon as they sit for meditation. The pure ripe mind will at once burn with the fire of meditation.

Clarify your idea again and again. Think clearly. Have deep concentration and right thinking. Introspect in solitude. Purify your thoughts. Still the thoughts. Silence the bubbling mind. Allow one thought-wave only to rise from the mind and settle down calmly. Then allow another thought to enter. Drive off all extraneous thoughts that have nothing to do with the subject matter on hand. An efficient control over thoughts, through long practice, is a great help in meditation.

Watch every thought very carefully. Shut out all useless thoughts from the mind. Your life must tally with your meditation. You keep up your meditation during work also. Do not give new strength to evil thoughts by constantly thinking. Restrain them. Substitute sublime thoughts.

22 JULY - TRAINING OF THE MIND

If a pebble in our shoe torments us, we expel it. Once the matter is understood, it is just as easy to expel an intruding and obnoxious thought from the mind. Thoughts are the sources of all actions - they are real karma, real action. If, right at the beginning, you can root out all evil thoughts, you will not do any evil actions. You will be free from misery and anxiety.

Watch the thoughts with vigilance. Once the tossing of the mind vanishes, the mind will be very calm and you will get good meditation. Free yourself from the clutches of the mind, and liberation will come by itself. Those who have even a little control over their thoughts and speech will have a calm, serene, beautiful face, a sweet voice and brilliant, lustrous eyes.

Conserve all mental energy. Use it for spiritual purposes. Do not store useless information in your brain. Learn to unmind the mind. Then only you can fill the mind with divine thoughts. As all the dissipated mental rays are collected you will gain new mental strength. Useless thoughts impede your spiritual growth; obnoxious thoughts are stumbling blocks to spiritual advancement.

In untrained persons four or five kinds of thoughts occupy the mind at one time. These may be thoughts of the household, of business, of the office, of the body and so on. If you watch carefully you will see that many thoughts are inconsistent and that the mind wanders aimlessly.

Entertain only thoughts that are useful and helpful. These are the stepping stones to all spiritual progress. Every thought must be of a constructive nature; it must be positive and definite. Mental images must be well-defined. Every thought must bring peace and comfort to others and never bring pain or unhappiness. Then, you are a blessed soul on earth.

Always watch your mind. Be vigilant. Be alert. Do not allow waves of irritability, jealousy, anger, hatred and lust to arise in the mind. These are the enemies of meditation, peace and wisdom. Suppress them at once by entertaining sublime thoughts. Evil thoughts which have already arisen may be destroyed by originating and maintaining good thoughts, by repeating any mantra, by doing any good actions, by abstracting the mind and by enquiring, "Who am I?" or by will-force.

23 JULY - CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER

A terrible fit of anger shatters the physical nervous system. It produces a lasting impression on the inner astral body. Although the effects of a fit of anger may seem to subside in a short time, the vibration or wave, continues to exist for days in the astral body. A slight unpleasant feeling that lasts in the mind for five minutes, may produce a deep inflammation of the astral body. It may take several weeks or months even for this ulcer to heal.

Now, have you realised the disastrous consequences of anger? Do not be victims of anger. Control it by love, mercy, sympathy, vichara (enquiry) and consideration for others. Even slight annoyance, or irritability, affects the mind and the astral body.

Aspirants should not allow these vrittis (thought-waves) to manifest in the mind-lake, as they may burst out as big waves of anger at any moment, if you are careless or weak. There should not be the least disturbance in the mind-lake it should be perfectly calm and serene. Then only you will find meditation possible.

It is difficult to control anger. Anger is a manifestation of shakti (energy). At first, try to reduce its force. and its frequency of duration. Endeavour to attenuate or thin out this formidable modification of the mind.

Do not allow this modification to assume the form of a big wave on the surface of the conscious mind. Nip it in the bud when it is in the form of irritability. Divert the mind. Entertain divine thoughts. Do vigorous japa (repetition of God's name) and kirtan (chanting). Repeat some prayers or slokas (verses) from the scriptures.

Develop the opposite, divine qualities. Develop patience, love, forgiveness - anger will die by itself, gradually. Blessed are those high-souled people who can control their anger by pure, strong will and intellect.

Be serene. Serenity is like a rock. Waves may dash on it but they cannot affect it. Waves of irritation may break on this rock of serenity but they cannot affect it. Meditate daily on the ever-tranquil atman (self). You will attain this sublime virtue of serenity gradually.

24 JULY - DEPRESSION AND DEVOTION

Every aspirant in the spiritual path becomes a victim to the mood of depression in the beginning. You have to overcome this mood through discrimination, reflection, singing God's name, prayer, etc. This mood is like a passing cloud. It will pass off if you are vigilant. Do not mistake emotion for devotion.

Whenever you get into a mood of depression, sing God's name vigorously; sitting alone in your room, sing with a melting heart. You may sing silently if you wish. This is an easy way to drive away this undesirable mood.

Try to control all wild outbursts of weeping. This is a weakness, a negative state. But do allow the pearl drops of divine love or ecstasy to trickle down your face occasionally, when you are in a profoundly prayerful or meditative mood.

Shed the tears of pure, divine love when you are alone, when you are in communion with the Lord. Do not weep in the presence of others. The rare pearl-drops of divine love are the outcome of the melting of the heart by the fire of devotion and the fire of painful separation from the Lord.

Sometimes a man feigns to be a devotee. He sheds false tears to make his neighbours think he is a great devotee. On account of sympathetic action, his neighbours also begin to weep - but there will not be one iota of devotion in their hearts.

Devotion is a very rare gift from God. Weeping itself is not a criterion by which to judge the devotional nature of a man or a woman. Do not mistake the crocodile tears of a hypocrite bhakta (devotee) for the genuine pearl drops of divine love which inspire and elevate bystanders. One may not weep outwardly and yet he may be a genuine, silent devotee.

Identify yourself with the emotionless state or Brahman, and rest peacefully for ever.

Satvic (peaceful) emotion is quiet. Rajasic (passionate) emotion is terrible. Tamasic (dull) emotion is confused. Rajasic and tamasic emotions are of a turbid nature and therefore cannot receive a reflection of the blissful nature of atman. Rajasic and tamasic emotions present a reflection of intelligence but not of bliss. Satvic emotions present a reflection of both blissfulness and intelligence.

25 JULY - BRAVE ALL TRIALS

Trials, difficulties, troubles and sufferings are necessary for your purification and to strengthen your will and power of endurance. Face them bravely and come out triumphantly. Press on. Strive on with all your will; only then is the grace of God bestowed.

God helps those who help themselves. If bad thoughts enter your mind, simply ignore them. Offer a prayer to the Lord and substitute divine thoughts by studying the sacred books. The spiritual fire should be generated day after day. Hold fast to the ideal. Keep the flame of aspiration ever bright. Scorn mundane delights and strife.

Dedicate your life to God. Meditate. Scale the spirit's steepest height and reach the peak of eternal wisdom and bliss divine. Nothing is able to daunt the firm and resolute aspirant or turn him from a course which he considers to be right, or which he holds to be his duty.

Be brave and courageous. You must pass with one breath over the mountain of difficulties. The atman cannot be attained by a life of weakness and error. You have infinite strength within you. Be strong. Look within. Meditate. Tap the source. Have an indomitable will, backed by an abiding faith. You are bound to succeed in everything.

God is the light of lights. He is knowledge. He is the knower. God is the same from age to age. God never changes; he is ageless. God has no opposite.

God is truth, beauty, goodness. God has no religion; He is the source of all religion. God is one. God is peace. God is universal harmony. God is love and law. As a lamp cannot burn without oil, so man cannot live without God.

Creation reveals that God is dharma (righteousness). God is the bestower of grace which is boundless and inexhaustible.

26 JULY - ORDER IN YAMA AND NIYAMA

There is a deliberate order in the five parts or limbs of yama (self-control). Ahimsa (non-violence) comes first, because man must remove his brutal nature first. He must become non-violent; he must develop cosmic love. Only then does he become fit for the practice of yoga. Then comes satyam or truthfulness. Because the whole phenomenon of maya (illusion) is asat or unreal, the aspirant should be aware of this fact. He should ever remember the truth or Brahman. Then comes asteya or non-stealing. Because he must develop moral consciousness, he must know right from wrong, righteousness from unrighteousness; and he must know that all are one. Brahmacharya is a divine attribute. The aspirant is now becoming a superman by the practice of brahmacharya or celibacy. The fifth is aparigraha. The yogic student is free now from desires, cravings, unnecessary wants, luxuries, desire to possess and enjoy. He has a very expanded heart. Yama is "taking of vow". Niyama is "religious observance".

Yama is not a policy or company manners or courtesy, it is sticking to ideals and principles; it is development of divine traits that will transform human nature into divine nature; it annihilates desires, cravings, evil qualities; it eradicates brutal instinct and brutal nature; it removes harshness, violence, cruelty and covetousness; it fills the heart with cosmic love, kindness, mercy, goodness, purity and divine light. It is the foundation of divine life or yoga, on which the super-structure of samadhi is built. It is the corner-stone of yoga, on which the edifice of superconsciousness is built.

Niyama is canon or religious observance. It consists of five limbs; namely, shaucha, santosha, tapas, svadhyaya and Ishvara pranidhana. Saucha is purity, internal and external. Santosha is contentment. Tapas is austerity or control of senses or meditation. Svadhyaya is study of scriptures. It means also chanting of mantra (name of God) or enquiry. Ishvara pranidhana is self-surrender to the Lord. It is consecration of one's work as an offering to the Lord.

There is an intimate relation between yama and niyama. Niyama safeguards yama. If one has internal purity one can get established in brahmacharya. If you have contentment, you will not steal or hurt others or tell lies. It will be easy for you to practise aparigraha.

27 JULY - BLESSING OF AHIMSA

Ahimsa (non-violence) is one of the foremost vows of good life. It is a supreme duty of man - ahimsa paramo dharmah - thus scripture declares. In the regeneration and divinisation of man, the first step is to eliminate the beastly nature. The predominant trait in beasts is cruelty; therefore wise sages prescribed ahimsa. This is a most effective master-method to counteract and eradicate completely the brutal, cruel nature in man. O earnest aspirant: Ponder the great significance, and immense importance, value and blessings of ahimsa and start its practice now - this moment.

Ahimsa is not merely non-killing as some think. Ahimsa is perfect harmlessness and positive love also. It is to abstain even from the slightest thought of harm to any living creature - mentally, verbally, or by deed. There is no excuse nor exception to the above rule. Harsh words to beggars, servants or inferiors is himsa (cruelty). To fail to relieve pain or trouble in another is negative himsa. To approve of another's harsh actions is against ahimsa. Avoid strictly all forms of harshness, direct or indirect, positive or negative, immediate or delayed. Practise ahimsa in its purest form, O Saumya'. and become divine. Ahimsa and divinity are one.

Ahimsa is a weapon of the strong. It cannot be practised by weaklings. Ahimsa is supreme love. He who embraces ahimsa embraces all, loves all. To begin with, stop all physical violence, stop speaking vulgar and harsh words. Then attack the mind directly. There will be inner agitation. You may think of doing violence. Check this thought-wave through prayer, worship, meditation, enquiry, pranayama (yoga breathing), satvic (pure) food, and study of sacred books. Generate again and again currents of love by cultivating the feeling that 'everything is the self' (atma-bhava), or 'everything is the Lord' (Narayana-bhava).

You will fail one hundred times, but it does not matter. Stand up again. Make fresh resolves and stick to them tenaciously. March on boldly with steady steps, O knower of thyself: Never despair. Study the lives of the apostles of non-violence - Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi and others, again and again. Keep their mental picture and ideals before your mind's eye and draw inspiration from them. Carefully watch your conduct, thought and speech and deeds daily and you will grow steadily in the practice of non-violence.

28 JULY - AHIMSA IS SUPREME VIRTUE

That work which gives elevation, joy and peace to the mind, is right. That which brings depression, pain and restlessness to the mind is wrong. This is an easy way to find out what is right and what is wrong.

Selfishness clouds understanding. Therefore if a man has got even a tinge of selfishness, he cannot detect what is right and what is wrong. A very pure, subtle, sharp intellect is needed for this purpose.

The Gita describes the nature of satva (purity), rajas (dynamism) and tamas (inertia in relation to reason) in chapter eighteen. It says:

"That which knoweth energy and abstinence, what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, fear and fearlessness, bondage and liberation - that reason is pure, O Partha. That by which one understandeth right from wrong and also what ought to be done, and what ought not to be done - that reason, O Partha, is passionate. That which, enwrapped in darkness, thinketh wrong to be right, and which seeth all things subverted - that reason, O Partha, is of darkness."

Various other definitions are given by wise men to help the students in the path of righteousness. In the Bible it is said

"Do unto others as you would be done by."

This is a very good maxim. The whole gist of right conduct is here. If one practises this very carefully, he will not commit any wrong action.

"Ahimsa paramo dharmah". Ahimsa is non-injuring in thought and word and deed. "This is the highest of all virtues." If one is well established in ahimsa of thought and word and deed, one can never do any wrong action.

Ahimsa comes first in the practice of yama or self-restraint. To give pleasure to others is right. To spread misery and pain, is wrong. One can follow this in one's daily conduct towards others and can evolve in one's spiritual path.

Do not perform any act that brings you shame or fear. You will be quite safe if you follow this rule. Stick to any rule that appeals to your reason and conscience and follow it with faith and attention. You will soon evolve and reach the abode of eternal happiness.

29 JULY - WHAT IS SATYAM?

God is truth. He can be realised only by speaking truth and observing truth in thought, word and deed. Truthfulness, equal vision, self-control, absence of envious emulation, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, absence of jealousy, charity, thoughtfulness, disinterested philanthropy, self-possession and unceasing and compassionate harmlessness are the thirteen forms of truth. Your thoughts should agree with your words and your words should agree with your actions. To think of one thing, say another and do a third is horrible - it is nothing but crookedness. By telling lies you pollute your conscience and infect your sub-conscious mind. The habit of telling lies will be carried on to your next birth and you will suffer in birth after birth. Have you ever thought of this?

If you are established in truth, all other virtues will cling to you. Penetrate more deeply into the kingdom of truth. Sacrifice your all for the truth. Die for the truth. Speak the truth. Truth is life and power. Truth is existence. Truth is knowledge. Truth is bliss. Truth is silence. Truth is peace. Truth is light. Truth is love. Live to realise the truth.

Truth is the law of life. Truth means the strength of will to abide by positive principles - a sense of justice, an unbiased mind and recognition of its subtle essence in all life. Truth is like a ladder leading to heaven, or a boat enabling one to cross the ocean of misery. Speak the truth, but let it not be unpleasant and speak not of any pleasing falsehood - this is eternal religion.

Fire burns everything; it is true to its nature. Water flows from a higher level; the seed sprouts and becomes a tree; the scorpion stings; these are all true to their nature. This is satyam. But man violates truth; he is ungrateful. He is not true to his essential nature. Wife poisons the husband; sons are not filial towards their fathers; sons murder their parents; this is not truth. To manifest one's essential divine nature, to manifest divine virtues is satyam or truth. To be true to one's own self is satyam.

A truthful man is free from worry and anxiety, he has a calm mind. He is respected by society. If you speak the truth for twelve years you will get vak-siddhi - then whatever you speak will come to pass. There will be great power in your speech - you will be able to influence thousands.

30 JULY – THIEVES!

Asteya is non-stealing. This is one of the five limbs of yama (self-restraint). This is also another form of self-restraint. Why does a man steal? He wants something. When he cannot get it by legitimate ways of earning, he begins to steal things. Desire (trishna) or want is the root cause for stealing. This is a deep-rooted, evil trait in man.

Control desires or (trishnas) and cravings. Reduce your wants. Reflect and do vichara. Think of the evil result of stealing, namely, killing of conscience, dishonour, pin-pricks, guilty conscience, unfitness for yoga, bad name in society, punishment through the law of karma and penal code. Think of the advantages of non-theft (asteya) - honour, clean conscience, reward in heaven, fitness for the practice of yoga. You will at once stop this stealing habit.

Man removes a thing secretly without the knowledge of the owner; he does not like that his act may be known by others. This is stealing. Taking blotting paper, pins, paper, pencil, etc., from the office is stealing. Hoarding money too much is stealing. Eating too much or gluttony is stealing. Ever thinking of objects by increasing the wants is also stealing in a comprehensive sense. Keeping more things than are actually necessary is also stealing. A yogic student must be free from all these forms of theft. He must have a very clean mind - like the pure white cloth or crystal. Then alone atman (self) will shine in his heart.

Man is not very careful and conscientious. His mind brings up very clever arguments. Some secretly take away some old journals which contain some pictures or useful matter and say: "This is nothing. It is only an old copy. It will go into the hands of a shop-keeper for packing." But the thing is, he has removed it without the knowledge of the librarian, so it is theft.

Even a sensitive mind becomes blunt gradually by continuous stealing, by jumping from stealing small things to big articles. Even a little dirt, a little theft affects the mind of a yogic student seriously. He will have to be very careful and vigilant. He must keep the mind as clean as a polished mirror. He must avoid even very little thefts in any form. Then alone will he have success in yoga.

31 JULY - STEPS TO CELIBACY

There are four processes in the practice of brahmacharya (celibacy). First control the sex impulse and sex vasana (habit) through dama (control of senses) and pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), then practise conservation of sex energy. Shut all holes through which energy leaks; then divert the conserved energy into the proper spiritual channels through japa (repetition of God's name), kirtan (chanting), selfless service, pranayama (yoga breathing) and study, vigilance, self-analysis, introspection and vichara (enquiry). Then have conversion or sublimation of the sex-energy. Let it be converted into ojas (spiritual energy) or brahma-tejas (Brahmic radiance) through constant meditation (brahmachintana) and Lord's grace.

A vedantin diverts his mind through asserting, "I am all-purity. I am sexless atman (self). Om. Om. Om." A bhakta (devotee) diverts his mind through japa, kirtan, service of guru (preceptor), service in temple, study of Bhagavatam, Ramayana, etc. A karma (active) yogi diverts his mind. He is ever occupied in some kind of useful service or other. A hatha yogi converts the sex-energy through kriya yoga and dharana (concentration) and pratipaksha bhavana (meditation on the opposite) method.

In common parlance brahmacharya is single life. In yogic parlance it is restraint of, not only sex-indriya (sense), but all senses. All senses contribute their own share to sexual excitement, sexual urge. The sight raises impure thoughts. Food strengthens the sex indriya, as tongue and genitals are born from the same source. Hearing of love, talks, touch, smell - all excite passion. Therefore all senses must be controlled. Repression or suppression of sex-energy will not help much in the practice of brahmacharya. What is wanted is sublimation. Sex-energy must be entirely converted into ojas shakti or spiritual force. In transformation the gross form assumes a subtle form. The gross semen becomes a subtle force; this is also not enough. Sublimation only gives full protection.

Lustful gazing at women, talking on love matters and about women, gluttony, too much sleep, shaking of body and aimless wandering, a desire to be in the company of women, are all forms of lust. Abandon all these. Practise purity in thought, word and deed and get established in satchidananda svaroopa (essential nature as existence consciousness - bliss absolute).

1 AUGUST - BENEFITS OF NON-COVETOUSNESS

Aparigraha is the fifth limb of yama (self-restraint). Parigraha is covetousness or greed, to possess and enjoy objects of the senses. Aparigraha is the opposite of parigraha. This is non-covetousness or non-acceptance of gifts; it is the absence of craving to possess and enjoy sensual objects. It is a mental state (bhava), wherein the sensual craving is dead. Parigraha leads to anxiety to preserve, to fear of loss, to sorrow in loss, to hatred, anger, untruthfulness, stealing, etc. Aparigraha puts an end to all these defects and bestows peace, contentment and satisfaction.

Aparigraha is indeed an aid to the practice of ahimsa (non-violence), satyam (truth), asteyam (non-stealing). When the craving is not satisfied you become angry, you hate the man who stands in your way of attaining and possessing things. You harm him in different ways; you speak untruth; you begin to steal things. The mind is ever in a state of agitation, restlessness, dissatisfaction and discontentment. Aparigraha removes all these defects. Mithya drsti (the seeing of falsehood in objects), dosa drsti (the seeing of defects in them), vairagya (dispassion), discrimination, dama (control of the senses) and pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses) are aids to the practice of aparigraha. Aparigraha is the common foundation for all yogas, just as dhyana (meditation) is the common meeting point of all yogas. It is a virtue to be practised not only by aspirants but by all persons of the world.

He who has no faith in the grace of the Lord and in the utterance of Lord Krishna in the Gita, "I ensure the welfare of the devotees who constantly think of me", will not practise aparigraha. The practice of aparigraha has wonderful benefits. It removes at one stroke, fear, attachment, disappointment, anxiety, agitation, restlessness, hatred, jealousy, anger, lust, greed, cares, worries, despair, and depression. Therefore practise aparigraha and become a dynamic yogi.

Pure love is bliss. Speak forgivingly, act lovingly, and serve lovingly. You will soon enter the kingdom of heaven or supreme peace. Hatred ceases not by hatred, but by love. Love is absolute goodness, honour, peace and purity.

2 AUGUST - PURITY AND CONTENTMENT

Shaucha is internal and external purity. External purity generates pure thoughts. Practice of shaucha brings disgust for one's own body and the body of others also. You will soon give up mamata (mineness of body). Take a bath in the early morning and wear simple, clean cloth. You will get the meditative mood quickly. Shaucha helps to maintain brahmacharya. The practice of celibacy, kindness, love, mercy, patience, japa (repetition of God's name) and meditation will purify the heart and eradicate jealousy, cruelty, hatred, anger and lust. This is internal shaucha.

This is the first anga or limb of niyama (discipline). Niyama and yama (self-restraint) are interdependent. Niyama strengthens and safeguards yama. Removal of lust, anger, hatred, jealousy etc., constitutes internal purity. Internal purity is more important than external purity. Internal purity makes the mind one-pointed; it bestows serenity, cheerfulness, joy, strength, harmony, poise and happiness; it instils love, patience and magnanimity. Therefore develop internal purity through diligent and vigilant effort.

Contentment (santosha) cuts at the root of all desires. It gives success in the practice of yama. It gives peace, one-pointedness of mind, serenity and eternal satisfaction. Divine light will descend in a contented mind alone. A contented man is satisfied with his lot, he is happy in whatever condition he is placed, he does not crave for things he has not got. Contentment is a mystic stream of joy that cools the three fires of samsara and joins the ocean of immortal bliss.

Contentment - this is a most vital subject. You all know the maxim: "A contented mind is a continual feast". The mind is always restless on account of greed. Greed is a kind of internal fire that consumes a man slowly. Contentment is a powerful antidote for the poison of greed. There are four sentinels who guard the domain of moksha (liberation). They are: santi, santosha, satsanga and vichara (peace, contentment, company of the holy and enquiry). If you can approach any of these sentinels, you can get hold of the other three. If you get hold of santosha (contentment) you can easily see the other three following you.

3 AUGUST - SUPREME PEACE IS YOUR GOAL

Every man in the world is restless and is striving after something. What it is he does not know. In the accomplishment of ambitious projects he seeks the rest that he feels he is in need of - but he finds that worldly greatness, when secured, is a snare and a delusion. He does not find any real happiness or peace in it. He gets degrees, titles, honours, power, name, and fame. He marries, he begets children, he gets all he had supposed would give him happiness. But he finds no rest. Pious men, saints, sages declare that this restlessness of every man, this state of discontent, dissatisfaction and uncomfortableness, of being ill at ease with himself and his surroundings, is solely due to the loss of the companionship of the partner of his soul, God.

Peace is absolute serenity and tranquility, wherein all the mental modifications, thoughts, imagination, whims, fancies, moods, impulses and emotions, instincts etc., cease entirely and the individual soul rests in his own native, pristine glory, in an unruffled state. It is not, of course, the temporary condition of mental quietude which worldly people speak of in common parlance, when they retire for a short time to a solitary bungalow in a forest for a short rest. Peace is the fourth state of superconsciousness. It is the realm of supreme bliss, eternal life and eternal sunshine, where cares, worries, anxieties and fears which torment the soul here, dare not enter; where all distinctions of caste, creed and colour vanish altogether in the one embrace of the divine love and where desires and cravings find their full satiety.

Peace is within. Search for it in the chambers of your heart through one-pointed concentration and meditation. If you do not find peace there, you will not find it anywhere else. Remember, dear friends, that the goal of life is attainment of peace and not the achievement of power, fame and wealth.

Desire is the greatest enemy of peace. There is no peace for him who has no concentration. There can be no happiness for the unpeaceful. In that supreme peace all pains, all sorrows, miseries, tribulations vanish forever.

The peace of the eternal lies near those who know themselves, who are disjoined from desire and passion, subdued in nature and of subdued thoughts. The man who is endowed with supreme faith and who has mastery over his senses, quickly gets supreme peace.

4 AUGUST - TAPAS

That which purifies the impure mind is tapas. That which regenerates the lower animal nature and generates divine nature is tapas. That which cleanses the mind and destroys lust, anger, greed etc., is tapas. That which destroys tamas (dullness) and rajas (impurity) and increases satva (purity) is tapas. That which steadies the mind and fixes it on the eternal is tapas. That which arrests the outgoing tendencies, destroys vasana (habits), egoism, raga-dvesha (likes and dislikes) and generates dispassion, discrimination and meditation is tapas.

This is the third limb of niyama (discipline) in raja yoga. It is one of the three items of kriya (dynamic) yoga. Tapas means austerity or practice of penance. The man of tapas is brilliant like a blazing fire. Tapas means restraint of the senses and meditation. Also tapas leads to control of mind. Standing on one leg, raising one hand up for a long time is also tapas, but this is tamasic (dull) tapas of an ignorant man. Panchagni tapas is sitting in the midst of four fires in the hot sun, having the hot sun as the fifth fire. Vairagis practise this very often. Desire moves the senses; desire can be controlled only if the senses are curbed. Tapas annihilates desires. Annihilate tapas abhimana(pride of austerity). The unintelligent tapasvin (ascetic) is always irritable, hot tempered and proud. Practise intelligent tapas.

Mental tapas is more powerful than physical tapas. He who bears heat and cold does physical tapas. He increases his power of endurance, but he may not be able to bear insult. He will be easily upset by a harsh or unkind word. He may take revenge and do tit-for-tat. He has no control over the mind. He has disciplined only the physical body. To keep a balanced mind in all conditions of life, to bear insult, injury and persecutions, to be ever serene, contented and peaceful, to be cheerful in adverse conditions, to have fortitude in meeting danger, to have presence of mind and forbearance, are all forms of mental tapas.

"The men who perform severe austerities, unenjoined by the scriptures, wedded to vanity and egoism, impelled by the force of their desire and passion, unintelligent, tormenting the aggregated elements forming the body and Me also, seated in the inner body, know these to be demoniacal in their resolves". (Gita. Chapter XVII.)

5 AUGUST - IMPORTANCE OF MAUNA

The organ of speech is a very great distracter of the mind. Too much talking indicates that the man is rajasic (restless). Talking makes the mind outgoing. Mauna (vow of silence) is almost death for the worldly man. It is a great blessing for the spiritual aspirant.

A worldly man always wants company and talk. This is his nature. Energy is wasted in this idle gossiping. Conserve this energy by mauna and utilise it for the contemplation of the divine. If you observe mauna for two months you will realise its advantages. Then you yourself will not leave the practice. If the organ of speech is checked then the eyes and ears come under control quite easily.

Mauna develops will power. It checks the impulse of speech. It is a great help in the observance of truth and the control of anger. Emotions are also controlled and irritability vanishes. A mauni (one who observes mauna) uses measured words and his speech is very impressive. A mauni first thinks whether his speech will wound the feelings of others, what sort of impression it will make on the minds of others, and so on. He is careful in his speech. He is thoughtful and considerate. He weighs each word before it comes out of his mouth. He can stay for a long time in seclusion. Practise. Feel the joy and peace of silence for yourself.

If you wish to observe mauna, you should keep yourself perfectly occupied in japa (repetition of God's name), meditation and mantra-writing. Do not mix with others. Do not come out of your room frequently. The energy used for speech should be sublimated into spiritual energy. It should be utilised for meditation. Then only you will enjoy serenity, calmness, peace and inner spiritual strength.

During mauna, introspect. Watch the thoughts. Then you will come to understand the ways of the mind and its workings. You can notice how the mind runs from one object to another in a moment's time. You will derive immense benefit from the practice of mauna. Real mauna is silence of the mind. Physical mauna eventually leads to silence of the mind.

Mauna of the mind is far superior to the mauna of speech. Mauna should come by itself. It must be natural. Forced mauna is only wrestling with the mind. It is an effort. If you live in truth, then mauna will come by itself, and there will be absolute peace.

6 AUGUST - STUDY THE SCRIPTURES

Svadhyaya is study of scriptures and books written by realised sages. It is one of the limbs of niyama (discipline) in raja yoga. Svadhyaya is also enquiry of the nature of atman (self), or, “Who am I?” It is recitation of mantras (sacred formulas) also. Svadhyaya is indirect satsanga, when you cannot get positive satsanga of mahatmas (company of holy ones). Svadhyaya clears doubts, it strengthens the flickering faith, it induces strong yearning for liberation or aspiration, it gives encouragement and illumination, it places before you a list of saints who trod the path, encountered and removed difficulties, and thus cheers you up with hope and vigour. It fills the mind with satva (purity). It inspires and elevates the mind. It helps concentration and meditation. It cuts new satvic (pure) grooves and makes the mind run in these new grooves.

Svadhyaya is daily study of religious scriptures. It is daily parayana (study) of sacred books. It is the fourth anga (limb) of raja yoga niyama. It inspires and elevates the mind to high spiritual altitude. It clears doubts. It weeds out unholy ideas and cuts new spiritual grooves for the mind to move along. It reduces wandering of the mind (vikshepa). It helps concentration. It forms a kind of lower (savikalpa) samadhi (superconsciousness). It serves the purpose of spiritual pasture for the mind to graze upon. When you study the sacred books, you are in tune with the authors who are realised souls; you draw inspiration and become ecstatic.

Japa is the best of all spiritual practices in this modern age. It is the easiest too. Divine name alone will give you all success and bestow the highest spiritual attainments on you. The seeker after truth realises the highest goal of japa or recitation of the Lord’s name alone. Have faith in the saving grace of God and in the power of the Lord’s name. Repetition of the Lord’s name is a sure medicine for the disease of birth and death.

Japa of a mantra can bring the practitioner the realisation of his highest goal, even though he has no knowledge of its meaning. There is an indescribable power in the name of God (the mantra). If you repeat it with concentration on it’s meaning you will attain God-realisation quickly.

7 AUGUST - JAPA IS IMPORTANT

Japa is an important anga (limb) of yoga. In the Gita you will find: “Yajnanam japa yajnosmi - among yajnas (religious practice) I am japa yajna”. In kali yuga (dark age) the practice of japa alone can give eternal peace, bliss and immortality. Japa ultimately results in samadhi (communion with the Lord). Japa must become habitual and must be attended with satvic (divine) bhava (feeling), purity, love and faith. There is no yoga greater than japa yoga. It can give you all siddhis (powers), whatever you want, bhakti (devotion) and mukti (freedom).

Japa is the repetition of the mantra (mystic formula). Dhyana is meditation on the form of the Lord and His attributes. This is the difference between japa and dhyana: there is meditation or dhyana with japa (japa-sahita): there is meditation or dhyana without japa (japa-rahita). In the beginning you should combine dhyana with japa. As you advance the japa drops away by itself - meditation alone remains. At an advanced stage you can practise concentration separately. You can do whatever you like best in this respect. Om is both saguna and nirguna (manifested and unmanifested) Brahman. If you are a devotee of Rama you can repeat Om Rama for the manifestation of the manifested Brahman.

The name (nama) and the object (rupa), signified by the name, are inseparable. Whenever you think of the name of your son, his figure stands before your mental eye and vice versa. Even so, when you do japa of Rama Rama or Krishna Krishna, the picture of Rama or Krishna will come before your mind. Therefore japa and dhyana go together. They are inseparable.

Whilst you are doing japa of any mantra, think that you are really praying to your ista devata (chosen, beloved divinity). Think that your ista devata is really listening to you, that He is looking at*you with merciful or graceful eyes and that, with open hands, He is giving you full abhaya dana (asking you to be free from all fears whatsoever) with a view to giving you your desired objects. Entertain this bhava.

Do the japa with feeling. Know the meaning of the mantra. Feel the Lord’s presence in everything, everywhere. Draw closer to Him when you repeat His name. Think He is shining in the chambers of your heart. Think that He is witnessing the repetition of the mantra, just as He is the witness of your every action.

8 AUGUST - INSTRUCTION IN JAPA

Make the divine name the sheet-anchor and prop of your life. If you take to the recitation of the divine name, all inauspiciousness will certainly vanish. Om Tat Sat is the most excellent of mantras (mystic formula). One becomes a siddha (perfect being) by japa of this mantra, Om Tat Sat. By repetition of this mantra, Om Tat Sat one becomes the conqueror of death. Practice of the divine names and sincere prayer to the Lord, are the greatest purifiers of the heart and of human nature.

After selecting a suitable mantra, stick to it. Frequent change of mantra is not desirable. All mantras mean and signify the same thing - the supreme truth, the one eternal, infinite, almighty being. Ever remember the Lord. His divine name is the greatest treasure in this life. His name has got indescribable power. It bestows blessings upon all those who have faith.

Remembrance of the Lord is auspiciousness and forgetfulness of the Lord is inauspiciousness. Reciting the names of the Lord at bedtime is a good practice. Sing the Lord's names. Dance in ecstasy. Be regular in your sadhana (spiritual practice). Realise the self in this very birth.

Japa is of three kinds: manasic (mental), upamsu (humming) and vaikhari (audible) japa. Mental japa is more powerful than audible japa.

Get up at 4 a.m. and do japa for two hours. This is the most favourable time for japa and for meditation. If you cannot take a bath, wash your hands, face, feet before sitting for japa. Face north when sitting as this enhances the efficacy of the japa. Sit on a kusa (grass) seat or deer skin or rug, with a white cloth spread over it. This conserves body electricity. Recite some prayers before starting japa. Have a steady pose. Be able to sit on padma, siddhas or sukha asana for three hours at a stretch.

Repetition of the mantra removes the dirt of the mind things such as lust, anger and greed. The mind from which the impurities have been removed, acquires the capacity to reflect the highest spiritual truth.

9 AUGUST - REGULAR JAPA

Never do japa (repetition of God's name) in a hurried manner. Do it slowly with one-pointedness of mind and single-minded devotion. Pronounce the mantra distinctly and without mistakes. Do not repeat it too quickly or too slowly.

Do not use the index finger while telling the beads. Use the thumb, the middle and the ring fingers. When the counting of one mill is over, revert the mill and come back again. Cross not the meru (the "top" bead in the rosary). Whilst doing japa, cover your hand with a towel.

Be vigilant. Keep an alert attention during japa. When sleep tries to overpower you, stand up and do japa. Resolve to finish a certain minimum number of malas before leaving your seat.

The mala (rosary) is a whip to goad the mind towards God. Sometimes do japa without a mala; just go by the clock. Along with the japa, practise meditation. Gradually japa will drop and meditation alone will continue.

Have four sittings for japa each day. These should be in the early morning, at noon, in the evening and at night. Regularity in japa sadhana (practice) is most essential. Sit in the same place, at the same time, always.

Japa must become a habit. Even in dream you must be doing japa. Japa yoga is the easiest, quickest, safest, surest and cheapest way for attaining God-realisation. Glory to the Lord! Glory, glory to his name.

Hold fast to the Lord. Love Him. Embrace Him. Do not worry over trifles. Do japa constantly. Recite the name constantly. The name of the Lord alone is bound to achieve what nothing else can achieve in the kali yuga (iron age). Wash the mind with the water of the Lord's name. Cleanse it of desire, jealousy, pride, hatred, etc. Sing the name again and again. You will reach the other shore of fearlessness and immortality.

10 AUGUST - SELF-SURRENDER

Surrender is ishvarapranidhana - the devotee consecrates all his works and their fruits to the Lord. The devotee has no will of his own. He says unto the Lord, “I am thine. All is thine. Thy will be done. I am an instrument in thy hands.” In surrendering one’s will to the Lord, his will becomes one with the cosmic will. He becomes one with the Lord. There is no loss in surrendering one’s will to the Lord.

Self-surrender is complete surrender of the self to God. Self-surrender makes the devotee feel the reality of divine grace and the Lord’s readiness to bestow help on him at all times. The divine influence streams into his being and moulds it to make it a fit medium for divine realisation and divine instrumentality.

Surrender and grace are interrelated. Surrender draws down grace and grace makes surrender complete. Surrender starts the purification of the heart and grace completes it. Without grace complete unification is not possible. Grace divinises your being in order that the constant inflow and inspiration can be received and retained. It is through divine grace alone that one’s whole being is galvanised and rejuvenated.

The self-arrogating little ego perishists and resists again and again. It clings leech like to old habits, cravings and desires. It wages guerilla war; it resists surrender. It demands certain objects for its secret gratification. The whole being should be surrendered. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says: “tameva saranam gaccha sarvabhavena bharata, (flee unto Him for shelter with all thy being, O Bharata)”. The chitta, the ego, the mind, the intellect and the soul, should all be placed at the feet of the Lord. Mira did this and so obtained the grace of Lord Krishna and became one with him.

The vulgar, stiff, obstinate ego is harder than diamond, reinforced concrete or steel. It is very difficult to melt it. Constant vigilance and ceaseless effort are necessary to slay this dire enemy of peace and wisdom. It keeps subtle desires for its own silent appeasement. Introspect. Find out the subtle desires that lurk in the corners of your heart, through the search-light of concentration and discrimination. Kill them through regular, silent meditation.

11 AUGUST - SELF-SURRENDER --- TRUE AND FALSE

Self-surrender is a safe and sure means of God-realisation. Surrender yourself and all your belongings to the feet of the supreme. Live a life of godliness. Think that nothing is yours and that everything belongs to God - this is surrender to God. Give the power of attorney to God; let him do whatever he wants. You will have no worry and no anxiety. You will be peaceful.

Surrender contains intense love and faith. It must be complete - the entire being must be surrendered to the Lord - mind, intellect, chitta and egoism. Desire and egoism are the two great obstacles to self-surrender.

If the mind says: “I am thine O Lord”; if the ego says “I must become a High Court Judge”; if the intellect says: “I am a great devotee”; if the chitta says: “I must attain siddhis”; this will not constitute perfect, unreserved surrender. This is only cheating the Lord, the inner ruler and witness.

After surrendering to the Lord you should not grumble, fret and fume when any trouble comes. You should not complain to the Lord: “O Lord, you have no eyes. You have no compassion.” If you complain, then there is no meaning in your surrender. Through surrender the devotee immerses himself into the eternal essence. You can endear yourself to the Lord only by self-surrender. The more the surrender the more the grace.

In difficulties and struggles, God will give you the strength and inner peace to bear them - this is his grace. Constant remembrance of the Lord; constant recitation of His name will fill your heart with satva (purity) and immense strength and peace to face the most trying conditions with perfect calmness and serenity.

Have perfect trust in God. Surrender to Him. Place yourself in his loving care - do this with your whole heart and mind, with perfect confidence and faith. Worry not about your future, about money, about your health - He will take care of you. You will have plenty; you will have immense strength and wonderful health.

12 AUGUST - YOGA OF SELF-SURRENDER

Repeat this formula very often and with intense faith: “The Lord is my strength, my support and my stay.” Thus you will derive strength, power and peace.

God knows what is best for you and He does what is best for you. His ways are mysterious - know His ways and become wise. Slay egoism and desire, they are the enemies, the obstacles of self-surrender. You may accuse God and say: “He is not just; He is cruel. Vicious persons are thriving I am virtuous and yet I suffer. There is no God.” Later on you will realise that He has done the best thing for you.

Do not pray to the Lord for the removal of sufferings. Pray to Him to grant you power of endurance and patience to bear all calamities. A devotee remains unaffected by adversities, trials and tribulations. He knows and feels s that they are all karmic purgations and are the real messengers of God. He welcomes them calmly.

A devotee alone gets troubles and adversities; because this is his last birth many karmas have to be worked out and he must be united with the Lord in this very birth. God gives immense strength and patience to His devotee to bear troubles and calamities. The devotee is ever calm and cheerful - he is not affected by them as his mind ever dwells in the contemplation of the Lord. He is not body-conscious.

Murmer not. Grumble not. Even a leaf cannot fall without the will of God. What is destined to take place as willed by God, takes place. Face the difficulties, the battle of life with a smile. Become a brave soldier. Difficulties come to intensify your faith, to strengthen your will and power of endurance and to turn your mind more and more towards God.

Pain is the great eye-opener. It is your silent teacher. It will make you remember God. Kunti prayed “O Lord Krishna, give me pain always so that I may ever remember you.” The more troubles and adversities you get, the stronger and firmer will be your faith in God. They will mould you into a divine being. Welcome them.

Seek God’s grace through self-surrender and He will show you the way. Transient are all mundane things! Evanescent are all earthly forms! Seek the immortal and attain bliss eternal.

13 AUGUST - DEVELOP THE BODY TOO

Physical culture or development of the body is as important as the development of the mind, will or memory. If the body is not kept strong and healthy, vigorous and active, no culture is possible. All cultures depend on a sound body. There is a wise saying: “A sound mind in a sound body.” The body is the-temple of God. It should be kept scrupulously clean by daily bath, a good scrub with a clean towel - this opens the pores which may have been clogged by sweat and sebum.

There are different types of physical culture. Select one according to your needs, taste, temperament and capacity. A man in poor health should take long brisk walks, morning and evening. Always walk alone; then you feel the presence of the almighty everywhere and you can be in perfect harmony with nature. Morning walks are pleasant. The cool breeze is refreshing and the fragrance of the flowers is invigorating. Finish the walk before sunrise. The walking itself should be brisk; you should have good perspiration. Only then it is exercise. Walk at least three or four miles a day. Do pranayama whilst walking. Inhale for six steps, retain for six steps and then exhale for six steps. This is good practice.

Be strictly regular in the performance of the exercises - this is essential for rapid progress. Those doing vigorous exercise should take substantial, nutritious food - otherwise their muscles will waste. They should take plenty of ghee (clarified butter), milk, butter, nuts etc. Those who practise the head-stand should take a light meal about ten minutes after they have finished the asanas. Weigh your body once a month and keep a record. Do exercise both morning and evening. Then rest for half an hour before taking your bath.

Observe brahmacharya (celibacy) as much as you can. If you remain a strict celibate you will attain astonishing results. What is there in a woman? What is there in repeating the same old act again and again which is so disgraceful? Are you not ashamed of all that? Do you not realise that it is all the play of avidya (ignorance) and false moha (delusion)? Strengthen the body and then do spiritual sadhana (practice). You will enjoy real bliss. I beseech you - learn to be wise - at least from now on.

Treat this body as your servant and instrument. You are distinct from this physical body which is only made up of the five elements and is subject to decay and death. You are in essence the reality, the all-pervading, imperishable atman (self). Identification with the body is the root-cause for bondage, for human misery and suffering. Do not become the slave of the body.

14 AUGUST - MENTAL HEALTH IS VITAL

Good health is the prerequisite for spiritual pursuits. The practice of yoga asanas for even fifteen minutes a day will help to keep good health. Become quite fit and you will be hale and hearty. Without good health you cannot wage war against the turbulent senses and the boisterous mind.

Body, mind and spirit constitute man. There is an intimate relation between body and mind. The body is the mould prepared by the mind, for its own enjoyment. Spirit is the substratum for the body and the mind. Mental health is even more vital than physical health. The spring of loveliness flows from health. Every joy that enlivens your heart comes from health. Lack of cheerfulness contributes to physical ill-health. If one is always cheerful and entertains good and divine thoughts, he will not suffer from any disease. He will have perfect health at all times.

Allow your body to respond freely to the action of natural agents. Put yourself in tune with the source of all health, power and strength. The cosmic force for well-being will then in-fill you. This is the ultimate factor behind all therapeutics. This is the secret to bear in mind. Use it for the background for the treatment of your ills, both bodily and mental.

With your being harmonised with the all-pervading cosmic being, you will cross the ocean of worldly existence by vigorous spiritual sadhana (practice). And, through His abundant grace and blessing, may you attain health and long life. In one's endeavour to utilise one's power in the quest of truth, the health of the body is of great importance. Man always talks of good health but does little or nothing about it. You must have a body that is fit, strong and healthy - then alone you will have a mind that can work to the full capacity.

Health and strength can be yours with a little positive thinking, careful regulation of personal habits, observance of nature's laws and daily meditation. The source of all health and healing is thy self. The power to overcome all conditions lies in you. Perishistently assert your ever perfect spiritual nature. Feel thyself to be an ocean of perfect health, strength and vigour. Allow the mind to dwell on this continuously.

15 AUGUST - YOGA ASANAS

Health is wealth. Good health is a valuable asset for one and all. It can be achieved by the practice of yoga asanas, which control the emotions and produce mental peace. It also distributes prana evenly throughout the body and different systems. It helps in maintaining the healthy functioning of the internal organs. It gives internal massage to the various abdominal organs.

Physical exercises draw the prana out but asanas send the prana in. The practice of asanas cures many diseases and it awakens the kundalini shakti. These are the chief advantages of the yogic system of exercises advantages which none of the other systems have.

Practise a few asanas daily - at least for fifteen minutes. Soon you will possess wonderful health. Be regular in your practice - this is of paramount importance. Asanas should be done on an empty stomach in the morning or at least three hours after food. Morning is the best time to do the asanas. Do not wear your spectacles whilst doing them. Wear a langotee and a singlet if necessary.

Be moderate in your diet. Practise brahmacharya (celibacy). Begin with a minimum time and gradually increase it. Answer the calls of nature before you begin doing the asanas. The endocrine glands play an important part in the economy of nature. The practice of sarvangasana keeps the thyroid healthy and this means a healthy functioning of all the organs and systems in the body.

The diaphragm, the muscular partition between the chest and the abdomen, is also developed by certain exercises such as - dhanurasana, mayurasana, and paschimottanasana. The movement of the diaphragm massages the abdominal viscera and organs. There will be daily evacuation of the bowels in the morning. Constipation, dyspepsia and a host of other ailments of the stomach and intestines will disappear.

Four asanas are prescribed for the purposes of japa (repetition of God’s name) and meditation. They are padma, siddha, svastika and sukha. Be able to sit in any of these for three hours without shaking. Then only you will be able to control the breath and do meditation. If you can be steady in the posture for even an hour you will acquire a one-pointed mind and feel infinite peace.

16 AUGUST - BENEFITS OF YOGA ASANAS

The practice of Asanas develops the body and the practitioner himself is kept agile and nimble. He has an elastic spine and a supple body. He has a keen and vigorous appetite. Any trouble is removed at its starting point by the practice of Asanas.

The three important organs, that is the heart, the lungs, and the brain and cerebro-spinal system, are kept in a healthy condition. The vital forces are preserved and increased. The circulation of the blood in the arteries and veins is kept in proper order by the practice of Asanas. There is no stagnation of the blood in any part of the body.

The practitioner of asanas always laughs heartily and radiates joy, strength and vigour wherever he moves. He always gets success in all his attempts. He looks very young even at the age of sixty. He is endowed with a peculiar glow in his face and eyes. He possesses a peculiar charm in his smile.

By practising the asanas regularly, men and women will acquire a figure which will enhance their beauty, and a suppleness which gives charm and elegance to every movement.

Health is thy birthright - not disease. Strength is thy heritage but not weakness; efficiency but not inefficiency; courage but not fear; bliss but not sorrow; peace but not restlessness; knowledge but not ignorance; immortality but not mortality.

This body is the moving temple of God. It is an instrument for crossing the ocean of samsara or the round of birth and death. It is the instrument for attaining the supreme abode of immortality, eternal bliss and perennial joy. It is a horse that can take you to the destination, the goal of life. Therefore it must be kept healthy and strong.

Proper training and care of the body, on an intelligent basis, is necessary. There should be harmonious development of all the muscles of the body, organs, nerves and frame.

17 AUGUST - SEE THE RESULTS

For those who have poorly developed chests, respiratory exercises are necessary. For those who have excess fat in the abdomen, abdominal exercises are essential. Exercises that are best calculated to improve the function of vital inner organs of the body and tone them up to counteract the tendency towards disease, are also indispensable.

The lungs can be developed through the practice of deep breathing exercises. By pranayama (yoga breathing), the apices of the lungs will get a proper supply of oxygen. There will be an improvement in the quality and the quantity of the blood. All the tissues and cells will be nourished with pure blood and lymph. The process of metabolism will be carried out in an efficient manner.

If the joints move freely, the ligaments and the surrounding tissues will be in a proper, healthy condition. Free movement of the spine will prevent stiffening and contraction of the spine. Ossification and degeneration of the bones of the spinal column (merudanda) will also be checked. A thickened and immovable joint gives a great deal of discomfort and uneasiness.

By the practice of asanas free movement is given to the elbow, wrist, ankle, shoulder and spinal joints. Muscles of the cervical, dorsal and lumbar regions are stretched and relaxed. There is dorsal and lumbar lifting and the body is kept in a fit condition.

Asanas are the system of yogic exercises of the Indian rishis (sages) of yore, based on exact principles. These are adapted for both men and women, for people of the East and West. You can keep up meditation while performing the asanas. This is accompanied by pranayama or regulation of the breath.

These exercises are preventative and curative. Some of them twist the body forwards and backwards. Others help the lateral movement of the spine. Thus the body as a whole is developed, toned and strengthened. The whole course can be finished in fifteen minutes. Within this short period you can realise the maximum benefit. This system is simple, exact, efficacious, economical of time and capable of being self practised.

18 AUGUST - PRANA AND PRANAYAMA

Breath is external manifestation of prana, the vital force. Breath, like electricity, is gross prana. Breath is sthula (gross) and prana is sukshma (subtle). By exercising control over this breathing you can control the subtle prana inside. Control of prana means control of mind. Mind cannot operate without the help of prana.

The vibrations of prana produce thought in the mind. It is prana that moves the mind. It is prana that sets the mind in motion. It is the sukshma prana or psychic prana that is intimately connected with the mind.

Breath represents the important flywheel of an engine. Just as other wheels stop when the driver stops the flywheel, all other organs stop working when the yogi stops the breath. If you can control the flywheel you can easily control the other wheels. Likewise, if you can control the breath, the external breath, then you can easily control the inner vital force, the prana. The process by which the prana is controlled, by the regulation of external breath, is termed pranayama.

Just as the goldsmith removes the impurities from gold, by heating it in the hot furnace and by strongly blowing the blow-pipe, so also the yogic method removes the impurities of the body and the indriyas (senses), by blowing the lungs - that is, by practising pranayama.

The chief aim of pranayama is to unite the prana with the apana and to take the united pranapana slowly towards the head. The effects, or fruit, of pranayama is the awakening of the sleeping kundalini.

“He who knows prana knows the veda,” is the important declaration of the srutis. In the Vedanta Sutras you will find: “For the same reason, breath is Brahman.” Prana is the sum total of all energy that is manifest in the universe. It is the sum total of all the forces in nature.

Prana is the sum total of all latent forces and powers which are hidden in men and which lie everywhere around us. Heat, light, electricity and magnetism are all manifestations of prana. All forces, all powers, and prana, spring from the fountain or common source - the atman.

19 AUGUST - PRANA CONTROL

Prana is expended by thinking, willing, acting, moving, talking, writing, etc. A healthy and strong man has an abundance of prana, nerve force, vitality. Prana is supplied in water, in food, in air and in solar energy. Excess prana is stored in the brain and nerve centres. Seminal energy, when sublimated or transformed, supplies an abundance of prana to the system. It is stored in the brain in the form of 'ojas'.

The yogi stores abundant prana by regular practice of pranayama. The yogi who has stored up a large supply of prana radiates strength and vitality. Those who come in close contact with him imbibe prana from him and get strength, vigour, vitality and exhilaration of spirits. Just as water flows from one vessel to another, prana flows, like a steady current, from a developed yogi to a weaker person. This may actually be seen by one who has developed his inner, psychic vision.

Breath is the external manifestation of gross prana. Correct habits of breathing must be established by the regular practice of pranayama. If you can control prana, you can completely control all the forces of the universe, mental and physical. The yogi can also control the omnipresent, manifesting power out of which all energies take their origin. He can control magnetism, electricity, gravitation, cohesion, nerve-currents, vital forces or thought vibrations. In fact he can control the total forces of the universe, both physical and mental.

A yogi can withdraw prana from any area. That area then becomes numb; it becomes impervious to heat and cold. He can send prana also to any area, and make it oversensitive. He can send prana to the eyes and see distant objects. He can send prana to the nose and can experience divya gandha (supernatural scent). He can send prana to the tongue and can experience supersensuous taste.

There is great significance in the order of the angas (limbs) of raja yoga. Practice of asana (posture) controls rajas (restlessness). Brahmacharya (celibacy) purifies the prana. Pranayama purifies the nadis (astral tubes). Pranayama it steadies the mind and makes it fit for concentration . It removes rajas and tamas (dullness) The practice of yama (self-restraint), niyama (discipline), asana and pranayama are all auxiliaries in the practice of concentration. Pranayama reduces the velocity of the mind. It makes it run and smaller and smaller circles.

20 AUGUST - KUNDALINI YOGA

Kundalini shakti is the coiled up, dormant, cosmic power that underlies all organic and inorganic matter. It is the primordial energy that lies at the basal centre (muladhara cakra) in a dormant, potential state. Kundalini yoga treats of kundalini shakti, the seven cakras (centres of spiritual energy), and the arousing of this sleeping kundalini.

Nadis are astral tubes that carry pranic currents. They cannot be seen with the naked eye. They are not the ordinary nerves, arteries and veins. There are 72,000 nadis. Three are important. They are the ida, the pingala, and the sushumna. Sushumna is the most important because kundalini passes through this nadi only.

The first step in kundalini yoga is the purification of the nadis. When sushumna is pure, then only will the kundalini pass through it. Kundalini is awakened by pranayama, asana and mudras by hatha yogins; through concentration by raja yogins; through devotion and perfect self-surrender by devotees; through analytical will by the jnanis; by japa (repetition) of mantra (God's name) and the grace of the guru (preceptor).

That aspirant who has firm faith in the scriptures, who is courageous, devotional, humble, generously merciful., pure and dispassionate, can easily awaken the kundalini and attain success in samadhi (superconsciousness). He should also be equipped with right conduct and self-restraint. He should constantly engage himself in the service of his guru and he should be free from lust, anger, delusion, greed and vanity.

When kundalini is taken to the sahasrara (the crown of the head), when she is united with Lord Siva, perfect samadhi (the superconscious, blissful state) ensues. Now the yogi drinks the nectar of immortality. May mother kundalini guide you all in your yogic practices! May her blessings be upon you all!

WHAT IS THIS WORLD?

This world is a mass of energy or electrons,

This is the view of scientists.

This world is all shakti,

This is the view of the saktas.

The essence of the world is Brahman, the absolute,

This is the view of vedantins.

Thus sayeth Sivananda

21 AUGUST - DEVELOP YOUR SIGHT

Whenever you meet a person, look at his figure carefully from top to bottom. Mentally note his peculiar features - the condition of his eyes, eyebrows, teeth, arms etc., the sort of dress he is wearing, what kind of cap he wears, whether he has a moustache or not. Notice his behaviour, his looks, his gait, whether he seems to be kind-hearted or cruel, whether he is intelligent or dull, polite or impolite, his colour, etc.

Many people cannot give a clear description of the faces of their own friends, their own parents! The obvious reason is that they have not developed the power of memory. Enter your friend's room; notice carefully all the things you see there. Then close your eyes and reflect. Come out of the room and note mentally all the things which the room contains, in order. Then re-enter the room and verify what you noticed. Practise this for some months - you will develop a wonderful power of sight.

Memory culture is very, very important. It brings success in God-realisation as well. A forgetful man always fails in his endeavours - he commits serious mistakes again and again. A man with a strong and retentive memory gets sanguine success in all his ventures and undertakings. He who has memory can conduct his business affairs very successfully. A student who has a retentive memory will get success in all his examinations. Intelligence is only one-tenth of memory.

The Sanskrit term for memory is smrti. Smarana is remembering. This is the function of the sub-conscious mind or chitta. The samskaras (habits) of thinking and acting are deeply impressed in the chitta, which is like the sensitive plate of a camera. All impressions are indelibly recorded there. Whenever you attempt to remember past events or things, they come to the surface of the mind through the trap-door. They come out in the form of big waves of thought or as mental images.

He who dwells in the sub-conscious mind (chitta) and in memory, he who is within this memory, whom the chitta and the memory do not know, whose body is the memory (and sub-conscious mind), who rules the memory and chitta from within, he is thy self, the inner ruler, immortal atman, antaryami, amritam. My silent adorations and prostrations to this inner ruler!

22 AUGUST - MEMORY CULTURE

Take up memory culture. Take to any exercise that suits you best and put it into daily practice. Keep a daily record this is very important. Mere skipping over the pages will not do. You will not be benefited. If you really want rapid improvement, if you want to become a real man, put the lessons into practice and take down notes. You can watch your progress and correct your mistakes.

Learn the art of extracting work from the subconscious mind. If you want to remember a forgotten passage, give a definite message to the sub-conscious mind just before you retire to bed. Talk to the sub-conscious mind, just as you would talk to a friend. Give the order in clear terms. The following morning it will place the words before you. If this fails wait with a calm mind till the answer comes from the sub-conscious mind itself. After you are well up in memory culture, you can take up will culture. Success in memory culture will give you a great impetus in will culture. You will rejoice now. You will train every nerve in the practice of will culture. You have started the current and it will keep up your zeal and enthusiasm.

Practise the assertions boldly and calmly. Fully understand the meaning of every assertion. Try to feel it. This feeling will slowly manifest. Do not be discouraged. You will have to fight your old enemies, the old samskaras. Try to develop patience, attention, power of endurance, balance of mind, presence of mind and so on.

Pay great attention to this; you will derive great benefit from it. Will is dynamic soul-force. If rendered pure and irresistible, it can work wonders, There is nothing you cannot achieve with a strong will, The majority of persons have no consciousness of will or mind or intellect, though they talk much of ‘will’ and ‘mind’.

The will has become impure and weak through vasanas (desires). When a desire is controlled it becomes changed into will. Sexual energy, muscular energy, anger, etc., are all transmuted into will-force when they are controlled. The fewer the desires, the stronger the will.

The force of brahmacharya is at the back of will. No will culture is possible without brahmacharya. Will is another name for the force of celibacy. Satsankalpa is the pure willing of jnanis. They can do anything through satsankalpa.

23 AUGUST - DEVELOP WILL POWER

Attention, power of endurance, overcoming aversion, dislikes and irritations, fortitude in suffering, tapas, fasting, patience, command of temper, forbearance, clemency mental power of endurance, firmness in meeting danger, power of resistance in attack, keeping up daily diary - all the pave a long way towards developing the will. You should patiently hear the words of others even though they are not interesting and charming. You should not fret and fume. Patient hearing develops will and wins the hearts of other Do actions or tasks that are uninteresting - this also develops will power. The actions that are uninteresting will become interesting after some time.

Never complain against bad environments. Create your own mental world wherever you remain, wherever you go. The mind deludes you, at every moment, at every step. Try to overcome the obstacles and difficulties by suitable means Do not try to run from bad, unfavourable environments. Go has placed you there to make you grow quickly.

Man must learn to separate himself from the vehicles in which he thinks, feels, acts, desires. He must know them to be part of the not-self, as material, external to life Thus the energy that went out to objects of lower desires becomes a higher desire, guided by the mind, and is then prepared to be transmuted into will. As the lower mind merges into the higher will and into that which is wisdom, the aspect of pure will emerges as the power of the spirit, self-determined, self-ruled, in perfect harmony with the supreme will and therefore free. Then only, all the bonds are broken and the spirit is unconstrained by anything outside itself. Then and then alone the will be said to be free.

If a calamity occurs, your mind should not be upset. Keep the mind cool and calm. Have presence of mind. Do not cry over spilt milk - it has come to pass, so face it with a cheerful countenance. Make the best of things. “What cannot be cured must be endured.” Keep an unruffled mind. Do not be carried away by undue sentiments and bubbling emotions. Control the mind. Reflect how. the calamity has come about.

There is always scope for suitable, effective, easy methods to tide over the crisis. Allow the turban to pass off when your head is on the point of being knocked down. This is sagacity. This is prudence. This is wisdom. Develop foresight, wisdom - many obstacles and calamities will be obviated. Do not brood over failures, defects, mistakes. This will weaken your will power. Let the defects remain there. They will be removed quickly when the will grows and when the will becomes purer and purer, stronger and stronger.

24 AUGUST - WITHDRAW THE MIND

Pratyahara is abstraction or withdrawal of the senses. From it starts the real inner spiritual life and the external world is shut out. Yama, niyama, asana, pranayama all prepare the aspirant for the practice of pratyahara. The mind is rendered calm by the practice of brahmacharya (celibacy) and aparigraha (non-covetousness). Asana and pranayama squeeze out the rajas (restlessness). Pranayama checks the out-going tendencies of the mind. Now the mind can easily be detached.

Pratyahara gives inner spiritual strength and great peace of mind. It develops will power and removes all sorts of distractions. An unsteady asana (posture), too much talking, too much mixing, too much work, too much food, too much walking, too much of activity (vyavahara) and poking one's nose into the affairs of others, all produce much distraction of the mind and stand in the way of the practice of pratyahara.

When you mix with people, again and again, fix the mind on your lakshya (point of concentration). Rest in your background of thought - whether saguna (form) or abstract vedantic image. This serves as a strong fortress to protect you from the onslaught of worldly thoughts.

Keep a steady pose, be regular in the practice of pranayama, cultivate vairagya (dispassion), vichara (enquiry) and viveka (wisdom). Always look at the defects of a sensual life. Develop serenity, contentment, patience. Be persevering, tenacious and ever-vigilant. Pray to the Lord. Sing. Do japa (repetition of God's name). Obtain divine grace. Observe mauna (silence), moderation in diet and seclusion. Practise celibacy. Stick to resolves. Live in seclusion. Be bold. Be pure. Be wise. Have satsanga (holy company). Give up evil company. Then you will have success in pratyahara.

Concentration is the direct method to get success in pratyahara. Sit in a quiet room and withdraw the senses. Have a spiritual background of thought and the mind will rest in this when released from work. Japa is another method. Divide the mind. Fix one portion on God and let the other portion work. Sightless gaze is also another aid. Feel that this world is the manifestation of the Lord. Understand that lasting happiness can only be had in the atman within. It is difficult to say where pratyahara ends and concentration begins. Concentration for twenty seconds makes one meditation and twenty such meditations make one samadhi (superconscious state). But this is only for beginners.

25 AUGUST - YOUR FOREMOST DUTY :CONCENTRATION

Sri Shankara writes that a man's duty consists in the control of the senses and the concentration of the mind. As long as one's thoughts are not thoroughly destroyed, through perisistent practice, a man should ever be concentrating his mind on one truth at a time. Through such unremitting practice, one-pointedness will accrue and instantly all the hosts of thoughts will vanish. Concentration is opposed to sensuous desires, bliss to flurry and worry, sustained thinking to perplexity, applied thinking to sloth and torpor and rapture to ill-will.

You are born to concentrate the mind on God after collecting the mental rays that are dissipated on various objects. This is your foremost duty, but you forget it on account of delusion for family, money, power, position, name and fame. Concentration of the mind on God after purification can give you real happiness and knowledge. You are born for this purpose only. Fix the mind on atman, the all-pervading. pure intelligence and self-luminous effulgence. Stand firm in Brahman, then you will become established in Brahman.

Attention plays a great part in concentration. It is the basis of will. The force with which anything strikes the mind is generally in proportion to the degree of attention bestowed on it. Attention on any object may be either subjective (internal) or objective (external). Practise concentrating your attention on unpleasant tasks, upon uninteresting objects and ideas. Then many mental weaknesses will vanish and the mind will become stronger and stronger.

Do a thing that the mind does not want to do. Do not do a thing that the mind wants to do. Don't fulfill your desires; don't hope; don't expect. Destroy vicious desires through virtuous desires and then destroy the virtuous desires also, through one strong desire for liberation. Practice of pranayama destroys rajas (activity) and tamas (dullness) and makes the mind steady and one-pointed.

26 AUGUST - THE PRACTICE OF CONCENTRATION

Fix the mind on some object, within the body or without. Keep it there, steadily, for some time. This is concentration. Practise this daily.

Ethical perfection is a matter of paramount importance. You can concentrate internally on any of the seven centres of spiritual energy. A man who is filled with passion and fantastic desires, can hardly concentrate at all, even for a second. His mind jumps around like a monkey.

Sit in the lotus pose. Gaze gently at the tip of the nose. Practise this for one minute in the beginning, gradually increasing it to half an hour. This steadies the mind and develops the power of concentration. Keep this up even as you walk about.

Or, sit in the lotus pose, fixing the mind between the eyebrows. Do this gently for half a minute. Gradually increase to half an hour or more. This removes tossing of the mind and develops concentration. Select either of these methods. If you want to increase your power of concentration, you will have to reduce your worldly activities. You will have to observe the vow of silence every day for two hours or more.

When the mind runs from an object, bring it back again and again. When concentration is deep and intense, the senses cannot operate. He who practises concentration for three hours a day will have tremendous psychic power and will power. You should steadily direct your gaze towards the tip of the nose (nasikagra drsti) and keep the mind fixed on the self only. In chapter five, verse 25 of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says: “Having made the mind abide in the self, let him not think of anything.” Another gaze is gazing between the eyebrows. Do not strain the eyes; practise gently.

When you practise concentration on the end of the nose, you will experience various sorts of fragrance. When you concentrate on the ajna cakra (eyebrow centre), you will experience divya jyoti (divine light). This will give you encouragement. It will push you up the spiritual path and convince you of the existence of transcendental things. Do not stop your sadhana (practice) now.

27 AUGUST - THE FRUITS OF CONCENTRATION

Now hear about the fruits that one gains from this practice. Supreme joy is for the yogi whose mind is peaceful, whose passionate nature is calmed, who is sinless and of the nature of the eternal.

When one advances in the practice of concentration, when one takes a real interest in it and when one has realised some benefits, then he cannot leave the practice. Concentration brings supreme joy, spiritual inner strength, unalloyed felicity and infinite, eternal peace. It brings profound knowledge and deep inner sight, intuition and communion with God.

The vital point in concentration is to bring the mind to the same point or object, again and again, by limiting its movements. Limit it to a small circle to begin with - that is the main aim. A time will come when the mind will stick to one point alone. This is the fruit of protracted sadhana (practice). Now your joy will be indescribable.

If you decide to meditate on the form of a chair, bring all thoughts connected with that chair together and dwell on these ideas. Do not allow thoughts of other objects to enter your mind. Thought should flow steadily, like oil flowing steadily from one vessel to another. Gradually reduce the number of ideas related to the object of concentration. When all these ideas die, you get the super-conscious state (samadhi).

When this last idea dies out and when there is not even a single idea, the mind becomes blank or void. There is mental vacuity. This is the stage of thoughtlessness referred to by Patanjali in his raja yoga philosophy. You must rise above this blank vritti (thought-form) and identify yourself with the supreme purusha or Brahman, the silent witness of the mind who gives power and light to the mind. Then and then alone you will reach the highest goal of life.

Prolonged meditation on the absolute leads to perfection. One of the greatest needs in spiritual life is meditation. Meditate and listen to the voice of God. This will give you strength and power and peace.

28 AUGUST - THE POWER OF CONCENTRATION

If you focus the rays of the sun through a lens, they can burn cotton or a piece of paper; but the scattered rays cannot do this. If you want to talk to a man at a distance, you make a funnel of your hand and speak; the sound waves are collected at one point and then directed towards the man. He can hear your speech very clearly. When water is converted into steam and the steam is concentrated at a point, the railway engine moves. The steam in the cooking vessels moves the lid and produces a put-put sound. All these are instances of concentrated waves. Even so, if you collect the dissipated rays of the mind and focus them at a point, you will have wonderful concentration. The concentrated mind will serve is a potent search-light to find out the treasures of the soul and attain the supreme wealth of atman, eternal bliss, immortality and perennial joy. Therefore practise concentration and meditation regularly.

Kumbhaka (retention of breath) helps concentration. It checks the velocity of the mind and makes it move in smaller circles and ultimately curbs all its wanderings. Trataka (gazing) is a potent aid to concentration. Fix the mind on the candle flame, or a black dot, or sivalinga (symbol of Siva), or saligrama (symbol of Vishnu). Brahmacharya (celibacy) helps concentration. Without brahmacharya you cannot have definite progress. Satvic (pure) food is another aid to concentration. Seclusion, mauna (silence), satsanga (holy company), asana (yoga posture), japa (repetition of God's name), practice of yama, niyama, fasting, moderation in diet, non-mixing with persons, little talking, little walking, little exertion, are all aids to concentration.

The mind can be controlled by continuous practice. You must always keep it occupied in divine contemplation. If you slacken your efforts, idle thoughts will at once occur. Continuous practice only can bring the mind under control.

If you wish to attain success in yoga you will have to abandon all worldly enjoyments. You will have to practise brahmacharya and tapas (austerity). These will help you in the attainment of concentration and samadhi (superconsciousness).

29 AUGUST - TRATAKA

Trataka is steady gazing. Write the word Om in black on the wall. Concentrate on it with open eyes till tears come in the eyes. Then close the eyes; visualise the picture of Om. Then open the eyes and again gaze till lachrymation manifests. Gradually increase the period. There are students who can gaze for one hour. Trataka is one of the sad kriyas (six exercises) in hatha yoga. Trataka steadies the wandering mind and removes vikshepa (tossing of the mind). Instead of gazing at Om you may gaze at a big black dot on the wall. The walls will present a golden colour during trataka.

You can do trataka on any picture of the Lord, either of Krishna, Rama, or Siva or on Saligrama. You can sit on the chair also. Fix the picture on the wall in front of your eyes. Trataka is the alpha-beta of concentration. It is the first exercise for yogic students in concentration.

Trataka with open eyes is followed by visualisation. Visualisation is calling up of a clear mental image of anything. Practise trataka for one minute on the first day. Then gradually increase the period every week. Do it gently with ease and comfort, as long as you can. Repeat your mantra, during trataka. In some people who have weak capillaries, the eyes may become red. They need not be alarmed unnecessarily. The redness of the eyes will pass quickly.

Practise trataka for six months then you can take up advanced lessons in concentration and meditation. Be regular and systematic in your sadhana (practice). If there is a break make up the deficiency or loss on the next day. Trataka removes many eye diseases and ultimately brings in siddhis (psychic powers).

Place a picture of Lord Jesus in front of you. Sit in your favourite meditative pose. Concentrate gently with open eyes on the picture till tears trickle down the cheeks. Rotate the mind on the cross, on the chest, long hair, beautiful beard, round eyes, and the various other limbs of his body, and fine spiritual aura emanating from his head, and so on. Think of his divine attributes, various phases of his interesting life and the ‘miracles’ he performed and the various extraordinary powers he possessed. Then close the eyes and try to visualise the picture. Repeat the same process again and again.

30 AUGUST - DEVELOP YOUR PERCEPTION

Organs deteriorate if you do not use them properly - just as hands and legs are atrophied by disuse and are developed by muscular exercise, etc. There is intimate connection between sight and memory, and between hearing and memory.

He who has acute sight, keen perception, good powers of observation and hearing - he will have a good memory. In the internal astral body there are counterparts of these. They are called astral senses. A yogi hears through astral ears and sees through astral eyes. Thus he can hear sounds from distant lands, he can see objects in distant localities. This is called clairvoyance and clairaudience.

Generally people are very careless. They have no wish to learn higher things and have a fund of knowledge. Keep a watch very close to the ear; hear the sound attentively. On the second day put the watch a little further away. Listen to the tick-tick sound. Every day increase the distance, training yourself to hear the sound. Then plug one ear with the index finger of your hand. Train the ears alternately.

Here is another exercise. Close both ears through yonimudra; try to hear the anahata sounds that emanate from the heart lotus. You will hear ten varieties of sounds, such as: flute, mridanga, veena, conch, bells, thunder, humming of a bee, drum, etc. Allow the organ of hearing (ear) to shift from one sound to another and carefully differentiate the various sounds. Eventually fix the ear on one sound. Try the gross sounds first and then go to the subtle sounds.

There is another exercise. Fix the ears on the pranava dhvani (Om sound) that emanates from a river, ocean or wind. It will be heard like ‘bhum’ or a long ‘Om’. Train your ears to hear this sound. Do this exercise at 4 a.m. or at 9 p.m. when the noise of the town has died down. Keep your ears keen. Differentiate the sounds of various kinds of birds, beasts, children, factories, motor cars, aeroplanes, cycles, shrieks, yells, snores, sobbing, crying, laughing, mocking, joking, etc.

The mind may be there, the instrument may be perfect, but if the mind is not functioning perfectly, you cannot see or hear properly. Perception is possible only when the mind is linked with the external instrument (ear, eye, etc.).

31 AUGUST - HEARTICULTURE

You must have a pure mind if you want to realise the self. Unless the mind is set free, unless the mind casts away all desire, craving, worry, delusion, pride, lust, attachment, likes and dislikes, it cannot enter the domain of supreme peace.

Mind is compared to a garden. Just as you can cultivate good flowers and fruits in a garden, by ploughing and manuring the land, by removing the weeds and thorns, and by watering the plants and trees - so too you can cultivate the flower of devotion in the garden of your mind, by removing the impurities of the mind (such as lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, etc.), and watering it with divine thoughts.

Weeds and thorns grow in the rainy season and then disappear in summer. But their seeds remain underneath the ground and as soon as there is a shower, the seeds germinate and sprout. Even so, the vrittis (modifications of the mind), manifest on the surface of the conscious mind, then disappear and assume a subtle seed-state in the form of samskaras or impressions. The samskaras again become vrittis, either through internal or external stimuli.

If you want to keep the garden clean you will have to remove not only the weeds but also the seeds that lie underneath the ground, which will eventually germinate otherwise. Even so, you have to destroy not only the big waves of the mind, but also the impressions which are the seeds for birth and death, if you want to enter the superconscious state.

Those who have removed the impurities of their minds by japa (repetition of God's name), service, charity, pranayama (yoga breathing), etc., will enter into meditation as soon as they sit for meditation. The pure, ripe mind at once burns with the fire of meditation. Without the help of meditation you cannot obtain know ledge of the self. Without its aid you cannot grow into the divine state. Without it you cannot liberate yourself from the trammels of the mind and attain immortality. Tear the veil that covers the soul, by practising regular meditation.

Self-realisation is the aim of life. The means to it are living an ethical life and ceaseless meditation. Spiritual duty is far more important than worldly duty. Live to seek God. Live to serve humanity. Fulfill God's will. You will be blessed. You will be happy.

1 SEPTEMBER - MEDITATION

If you want to get rid of the pains and afflictions of this samsara (worldly life) you must practise meditation. Meditation is the pathway to divinity. It is the royal road to the kingdom of Brahman. It is a mysterious ladder which reaches from error to truth, from darkness to light, from pain to bliss, from restlessness to abiding peace, from ignorance to wisdom, from mortality to immortality. Meditation leads to knowledge of the self, to eternal peace, supreme bliss. Meditation prepares you for direct intuitive knowledge.

Truth is Brahman. Truth is self. You cannot realise the truth without reflection and meditation. Be silent. Know thyself. Melt the mind in that. Without meditation you cannot liberate yourself from the trammels of the mind and attain immortality. Tear the veils that cover the soul. Rend asunder the five sheaths that screen the atman (self) by constant meditation. You will find final beatitude.

Meditation is a powerful tonic. The holy vibrations penetrate all the cells of the body and cure all its diseases. The powerful soothing waves that arise during meditation exercise a benign influence over the mind and the nerves. If you meditate for half an hour you will be able to engage yourself with peace and spiritual strength in the daily battle of life, for a week. You do this just through the force of this one meditation.

A yogi who meditates regularly has a magnetic, charming personality. Those who come in contact with him are much influenced by his sweet voice, his powerful speech, his lustrous eyes, his brilliant complexion, his strong healthy body, his good behaviour, his virtuous qualities and divine nature. People draw peace and joy and strength from him.

Close your lips. Shut the doors of the senses. Meditate on atman (self). You will enjoy peace and bliss.. The more you grow in aspiration and meditation, the more you grow God-like. For in meditation is the light of the Lord.

Meditate and charge your battery by contact with God. Dive deep in the chambers of your heart through profound and silent meditation, and bring up the pearl of truth.

2 SEPTEMBER - THE SECRET OF MEDITATION

Meditation is the road to the attainment of salvation (moksha). Meditation kills all pains, suffering the three kinds of tapas (fevers), and the five kleshas (sorrows). Meditation gives the vision of unity. Meditation produces a sense of oneness. Meditation is the aeroplane that helps the aspirant to soar high in the realms of eternal bliss and everlasting peace.

Meditation is the mysterious ladder that connects heaven and earth and takes the aspirant to the immortal abode of Brahman. Meditation is the continuous flow of one thought of God or atman, like the continuous flow of oil from one vessel to another.

When you sit for meditation, all sorts of worldly thoughts will crop up in your mind; this will disturb the meditation. You will be astonished. Old thoughts, old memories of past enjoyments will bubble up and force the mind to wander in all directions. The trap-door of the vast magazine of thoughts and memories, within the subconscious mind, is opened up and these thoughts gush out in a continuous stream. The more you attempt to still them, the more they will bubble up.

Do not be discouraged. Never despair. Through regular and constant meditation you will purify the sub-conscious mind and thus control the thoughts and memories. The fire of meditation will burn all thoughts. Be sure of this.

Meditation on the immortal self will act like dynamite. It will blow up all thoughts and memories in the sub-conscious mind. If the thoughts trouble you much, do not suppress them by force. Be a silent witness, as in a bioscope. They will subside gradually. Then you must root them out by regular silent meditation.

The practice of meditation must be constant. Then only will one attain self realisation, quickly and surely. He who practises meditation, by fits and starts, for a few minutes daily, will not be able to achieve any tangible success in yoga.

In the beginning, beginners fall down from meditation into their old grooves. They must lift up their minds again and again. They will have to fix the mind on the Lakshya(target). When the meditation becomes deep and steady, they eventually get established in God. Then meditation becomes Sahaja- it becomes habitual.

3 SEPTEMBER - SELF-EFFORT AND GRACE IN MEDITATION

You need a calm, clear, pure, subtle, steady, sharp one-pointed buddhi (intellect) to understand the reality of Brahman. Only then is realization possible. Only a trained mind which utterly controls the body, can enquire and meditate as long as life remains, never losing sight of the object of its search and never letting it be obscured by any terrestrial temptations.

Energy is wasted in useless idle talk and gossiping, planning and unnecessary worrying. Conserve energy by getting rid of these three defects and utilise it in meditation. Then you can do wonderful meditation. He who says and imagines that he practises deep meditation daily, when he has not removed the evil traits of the mind, deceives himself first and then others. He is a first class hypocrite.

If you strain yourself in meditation and go beyond your capacity, then laziness and inactive nature will supervene. Meditation should come naturally on account of serenity of mind, induced by practice of sama, dama, uparati and pratyahara (control of mind and senses, non-pursuit of pleasure and introversion of attention). Atman (self) is the fountain of energy. Thinking on atman or the source of energy, also is a dynamic method of augmenting energy, strength and power. Divine energy flows freely from the feet of the Lord to the different systems of the aspirant and new nerve currents, new grooves, new cells are formed. The mind and nervous system are remodeled and you will develop a new heart.

Conserve energy by talking little, observing mauna (silence), controlling anger, observing brahmacharya (celibacy), practising pranayama (yoga breathing) and controlling irrelevant and non-essential thoughts. Meditate and behold the imperishable atman. Rest yourself firmly in the self. Nothing can hurt you now. You can become invincible.

In contemplation, you are in spiritual contact with unchanging light; you are cleansed of all impurities. If you have an open heart, devotedly lifted up to God, the light of his purity and love will consume all your short-comings. This purifying process leads to a deeper insight into truth. This is the action of the grace of the Lord upon the soul in meditation. In this inflowing grace there arises that light of the mind into which God is sending the ray of his unclouded splendour.

4 SEPTEMBER - STAGES IN THAT PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

In the beginning you can meditate twice daily, from 4 to 6 in the morning and 7 to 8 at night. As you advance in your practices, you can increase the duration of each sitting, little by little, using your common sense and discretion, and also have a third sitting either in the morning between 10 and 11 or in the evening between 4 and 5.

In the Yoga Vasishta you will find: "The right course to be adopted by one who is in his novitiate is this: Two parts of the mind must be filled with the objects of enjoyment, one part with philosophy and the remaining part with devotion to the teacher. Having advanced a little, he should fill one part of the mind with the objects of enjoyment. two parts with devotion to the teacher and the remaining one part with getting an insight into the meaning of philosophy. When one has attained proficiency, he should every day fill two parts with meditation and the other two with devoted service to the guru. This will eventually lead you on to meditation for twenty-four hours."

Sitting in your favourite meditative pose and keeping the head and trunk erect, close your eyes and gently concentrate on either the tip of the nose, space between the two eyebrows, the heart lotus or the crown of the head. When once you have selected one centre of concentration, stick to it till the last with leech-like tenacity. Meditation is of two kinds, namely, saguna (with gunas or qualities) and nirguna (without gunas or qualities). Meditation on Lord Krishna, Lord Siva, Lord Rama or Lord Jesus is saguna meditation. It is meditation with form and attributes. The name of the Lord is also simultaneously repeated. This is the method of the devotees. Meditation on the reality of the self is nirguna meditation. This is the method of the vedantins. Meditation on Om, Soham, Sivoham, Aham Brahma Asmi and Tat Twam Asi is nirguna meditation.

If you want to keep the mind charged with the fire of Brahmic wisdom, you must always keep it in contact with the Brahmic fire of knowledge, through constant and intense meditation.

5 SEPTEMBER - LISTEN TO THE MYSTIC SOUND

Sit in padma asana or siddha asana. Practise yoni mudra by closing the ears with the thumbs. Hear the internal sound through the right ear. The sound which you will hear will make you deaf to all external sounds. Having overcome all obstacles you will enter the turiya state within fifteen days. In the beginning you may hear many loud sounds. Then try to hear more and more subtle sounds.

The mind having first concentrated itself on any one sound, fixes firmly to that and is absorbed in it. The mind becomes insensible to external impressions and becomes one with the sound. Being indifferent to all objects and having controlled the passions, you should, by continual practice concentrate your mind upon the sound which destroys the mind.

Having abandoned all thoughts and being freed from all actions, you should always concentrate your whole attention on the sound and then the chitta (mind) becomes absorbed in it. Just as the bee, drinking the honey alone, does not care for the odour, so the chitta, which is always absorbed in sound does not long for sensual objects - it is bound by the sweet nada (sound) and has abandoned its flitting nature.

The serpent chitta, through listening to the nada, is entirely absorbed in it and, becoming unconscious of everything, concentrates itself on the sound. The sound serves the purpose of a sharp goad to control the maddened elephant chitta, which roves in the pleasure garden of the sensual objects.

The sound proceeding from the pranava (Om) is Brahman. It is of the nature of effulgence. It is the seat of Vishnu. The mind exists so long as there is sound but, with its cessation, there is that state termed turiya. Being freed from all states and all thoughts, you will remain like one dead. The body is like a log. It does not feel heat or cold, joy or sorrow.

When spiritual sight is fixed - without any object to be seen - when prana (life force) becomes still - without any effort - when the chitta becomes firm - without any support - you become Brahman. When manas (mind) is destroyed, when virtues and sins are burned away, you shine as the effulgent, immaculate, eternal, stainless Brahman.

6 SEPTEMBER - EXERCISES IN MEDITATION

Keep a picture of Lord Krishna with a flute in his hands. Sit in your meditative pose and gently concentrate on this picture until you shed tears. Think of his feet, adorned with anklets. Think of his yellow silken garment. Think of the ornaments around his neck. Think of the long garland of beautiful flowers of various colours. Think of his ear-rings and the crown set with precious jewels he wears on his head. Think of the long dark hair, the sparkling eyes and the tilaka (mark) on the forehead. Think of the magnetic aura around his head. Think of his arms and hands, adorned with armlets and bracelets. Think of the flute, ready in his hands, waiting for him to play it. Then close your eyes and visualise this picture mentally. Repeat this process again and again.

This is one kind of meditation and is suitable for beginners. Sit in padmasana in your meditation room. Close the eyes. Meditate on the effulgence in the sun, or the splendour in the moon, or the glory of the stars.

There is a living universal power that underlies all these names and forms. Meditate on this power, which is formless. This will terminate in the realisation of the absolute, nirguna (attributeless), nirakara (formless) consciousness eventually.

Sit in your meditative pose. Close your eyes. Imagine that there is a supreme, infinite effulgence hidden behind all these names and forms, tantamount to the effulgence of millions of suns put together. This is also a form of nirguna meditation.

Concentrate and meditate on the expansive blue sky. By the previous methods of concentration the mind will cease thinking of finite forms. It will slowly begin to melt in the ocean of peace as it is deprived of its contents. Thus the mind will become subtler and subtler.

Concentrate on the picture of Om in front of you, Do this with open eyes until the tears flow profusely. Associate the ideas of eternity, infinity, immortality, etc., with Om.

The humming of bees, the sweet notes of the nightingale and all other sounds emanate from Om only. Om is the essence of all the vedas (scriptures).

7 SEPTEMBER - IMPORTANCE OF OM

Brahman is the highest of all. Om is his name. Om is also your real name. It covers the threefold experiences of man. From Om this sense world has been projected. The world exists in Om and dissolves in Om.

Om is the greatest of all mantras (mystic formula). Om bestows direct liberation. All mantras begin with Om. Om is the life, the soul, of all mantras. Every Upanishad begins with Om. Oblations that are offered to the various gods are all preceded by Om.

All languages, all sounds, come out of Om. The essence of the four vedas is Om. A - U - M covers the whole range of sound vibrations. A starts from the root of the tongue, U proceeds from the middle and M comes from the end, by closing the lips.

Om is the source of all religions and scriptures. This sacred monosyllable is the means of liberation from the bonds of matter. It leads one, stage by stage, to the highest bliss. It is fit for the lowest as well as for the highest and most advanced intellect. It is fit for the Brahmachari (celibate-student) as well as the sanyasin (monk). It is fit for any condition.

Om is your birthright. It is the common heritage of all. It is the word of power. It fills the devotee with spiritual strength, vigour and energy when chanted with harmony and rhythm. It brings inspiration and intuition.

It elevates the mind. It is a spiritual food and tonic. It is full of divine potency. Live in Om. Meditate on Om. Inhale Om. Exhale Om. Rest peacefully in Om. Take shelter in Om. May that Om guide you.

Om stands for all phenomenal worlds. From Om this sense universe has been projected. Om has been formed by adding the letters A-U-M; A represents the physical world; U represents the mental and the astral planes, the world of spirits, all heavens; and M represents the deep sleep state and, even in the waking state, all that is unknown, beyond reach of the intellect. Om therefore represents all. It is the basis of your life, thought and intelligence. All words that denote objects are centred in Om - hence the whole world has come from Om, rests in Om and dissolves in Om.

8 SEPTEMBER - SIVANANDA GITA

I was born of P.S. Vengu Aiyar and Parvathiammal on 8th September 1887 at Pattamadai, Tirunelvely District, S. India, in the line of Appayya Dixit. My star is Bharani.

I was extremely mischievous in my boyhood. I studied in the S.P.G. College, Trichy. I was a Doctor in Malaya States for 10 years. I took Sanyasa in 1924 in Rishikesh. I did tapas and meditation for 15 years. I went on lecturing tours for 10 years. I founded the Divine Life Society in 1936 and the All-World Religions Federation in 1945.

I am child-like in my svabhava. So I mix with all. I become one with all.

I am ever happy and joyful and make others also happy and joyful. I am full of educative humour. I radiate joy through humour. I respect all. I do salutations to all first. I always speak sweetly. I walk quickly.

I do japa and meditation while walking and while at work also. I am ever hard-working. I have intense application to work. I never leave a work till it is finished. I never procrastinate any work. I finish it then and there. I am very quick in doing things.

I cannot suppress the spirit of service in me. I cannot live without service. I take immense delight in service. Service has elevated me. Service has purified me. I know well how to extract work from others. I extract work through kindness, service, respect and love.

I am very regular in doing asanas and exercises. I even now do sirshasan, sarvangasan and other asanas. I do pranayama also regularly. These give me wonderful health and energy. I run round the bhajan hall daily.

I cannot deliver fiery lectures sitting on a special seat. Special seat pricks me. I stand up or throw the seat away and then begin to speak. I never sat on a special seat when I presided over spiritual conferences.

I rejoice in giving. I always give.

9 SEPTEMBER - SIVANANDA GITA (CONTINUED)

I am 59 (1946) now. I ever feel I am quite young. I am full of vigour, vim and vitality. I am ever cheerful. I sing, dance, run, and jump in joy. I am robust and strong. I can digest any kind of food.

I continuously work, read and write. I never go to hill stations or seaside for a holiday. Change of work gives rest. Meditation gives abundant rest. Work gives me delight. Service gives me happiness. Writing bestows joy. Meditation energises and invigorates me. Kirtan vivifies me.

"Aham Brahmasmi, Sivoham, Soham, Satchidananda Swaroopoham" - This is my favourite formula for vedantic meditation.

Hare Rama hare Rama Rama Rama hare hare Hare Krishna hare Krishna Krishna Krishna hare hare.

This mahamantra kirtan is my favourite kirtan.

At the present moment I am the richest man in the whole world. My heart is full. Further, all the wealth of the Lord belongs to me now. Hence I am king of kings, emperor of emperors, shah of shahs, maharaja of maharajas. I take pity on the mundane kings. My dominion is limitless. My wealth is inexhaustible.

My joy is inexpressible. My treasure is immeasurable. I attained this through sanyasa, renunciation, untiring selfless service, japa, kirtan and meditation. I am tall. My height is 6 feet. I have a sinewy frame. I have symmetrical limbs. I was a first class gymnast. I fast on Ekadasi. I do not take even a drop of water. I take milk and fruits on Sundays. I do not take salt on Sundays.

I lead a simple natural life. There is a fountain of youth in me. I beam with joy. I observe fasting, resting, airing, bathing, breathing, exercising, sun-bathing and enjoy freedom, power, beauty, courage, poise and health.

Om. Om. Om.

10 SEPTEMBER - SIVANANDA GITA (CONTINUED)

I love nature, music, art, poetry, philosophy, beauty, goodness, solitude, meditation, yoga and vedanta. I am humble and simple. I am frank and straightforward. I am perfectly tolerant and catholic. I am merciful and sympathetic. I have spontaneous and unrestrained generosity.

I am bold and cheerful. I am patient. I can bear insult and injury. I am forgiving. I am free from vindictive nature. I return good for evil. I serve that man who has injured me, with joy.

I love Ganga and the Himalayas. Ganga is my mother divine. Himalayas is my father divine. They inspire and guide me. I take bath in Ganga. I swim in Ganga. I adore Ganga. I feed the fishes of Ganga. I wave light to Mother Ganges. I pray to Ganga. I do salutations to Ganga. I sing the glory of Ganga. I write about the grandeur and glory of Ganga.

Ganga has nourished me. Ganga has comforted me. Ganga has taught me the truth of the Upanishads. Glory to Ganga! My daily routine is like that of Lord Buddha. I always remain in the room. I do japa, kirtan and meditation. I study sacred books. I write. I come out of the room for a short time for work, service and interview.

I talk a little. I think much. I meditate much. I try to do much and serve much. I do not waste even a single minute. I ever keep myself fully occupied. I lead a well-regulated life. I perform worship of atman at all times. I work for the good of others. Om. Om. Om.

Gita, Upanishads, Bhagavat, Yoga Vasishta, Avadhootha Gita, Vivekachudamani are my constant companions.

I am a strange mixture of service, devotion, yoga and wisdom. I am a follower of Sri Sankara. I am a Keval-Advaita vedantin. I am not at all a dry lip-vedantin. I am a practical vedantin.

I practise and advocate the yoga of synthesis. I practise ahimsa, satyam and brahmacharya. Glory to Sri Sankara!

11 SEPTEMBER - SIVANANDA GITA (CONTINUED)

I respect all saints and prophets of all religions. I respect all religions, all cults, all faiths and all creeds.

I serve all, love all, mix with all and see the Lord in all. I stick to my promises. I serve the poor. This is my delight. I do mental prostrations to asses, dogs, trees, bricks, stones and all creatures. I respect elders and sadhus. I obey. I please all through sincere selfless service.

I attend on guests very carefully. I run hither and thither to serve them. I shampoo the legs of sick persons and sadhus. I give very prompt reply to all my letters. I do several things at a time. I write with electric speed.

I spend everything. I do lot of charity. I do not keep anything. I take immense delight in feeding the poor and my students. I try to be a mother to them. I talk to others on things which I have myself practised. I look within always, introspect, analyse, and examine. I hold the trisul, spiritual diary, daily routine and resolve.

I ever served my masters with great sincerity and intense faith and devotion. I learnt many useful lessons for life. I developed many virtues.

I wandered without food during my parivrajak life. I slept on the roadside at night without clothing during winter. I ate dried bread with water. I stick tenaciously to my principles and ideals. I do not argue much. I live in silence.

I pray and do kirtan for the peace of the whole world, for the health and peace of sick people, and for the peace of the departed souls and the earth bound spirits also.

I take a dip in the Ganges in the name of all those who are longing for a bath in the Ganges. I sing the names of all saints of all religions in the bhajan hall. I observe All Saints day and All-Souls day. Om. Om. Om.

12 SEPTEMBER - SIVANANDA GITA (CONTINUED)

I constantly meditate on the following:

Prajnanam Brahman, aham brahmasmi, tat tvam asi, ayam atma brahman.
Satyam jnanam anantam brahman, santam sivam advaitam.
Aham atma Gudakesa. Aham atma nirvikarah sarvavyapi svabhavatah.
Brahma satyam jagan mitya jivo brahmaiva na parah.
Akarta, abhokta, asanga, sakshi, ajo nityah sasvatoyam purano.
Jyotisamapi tat jyotih.

To raise the fallen, to lead the blind, to share what I have with others, to bring solace to the afflicted, to cheer up the suffering are my ideals. To have perfect faith in God, to love my neighbour as my own self, to love God with all my heart and soul, to protect cows, animals, women and children are my aims. My watchword is love. My goal is sahaja samadhi avasta or the natural, continuous, superconscious state.

SONG OF JOY.

Om Om Om Om - Om Om Om Om
Om Om Om Om Om - Om Om Om Om
Om Om Om Om Om
Om Om Om Om Om Om - Om Om Om Om Om
Om Om.

Within you is hidden God
Within you is immortal soul

Kill this little "I"
Die to live
Lead the divine life.

Within you is the fountain of joy
Within you is the ocean of bliss.

Rest peacefully, in your own atma
And drink the nectar of immortality.

13 SEPTEMBER - PHILOSOPHY OF OM

The sound produced in the flowing of the river Ganges, the sound that is heard at a distance, the sound that proceeds from the bustle of the market, that is produced by the fly-wheel when it is set in motion, that is caused when it rains, or there is a conflagration, or thunder - it is all Om only. Split any word and you will find. Om there. Om is all-pervading, like akasa (space), like Brahman, the absolute.

Om is the symbol of Brahman. It is the word of power. It is the sacred monosyllable. It is the essence of the vedas. It is the boat to take you across to the other shore of fearlessness and immortality.

The word Om is the most appropriate name of Brahman. By its application, by its chanting, he becomes propitiated Om is emblematic of Brahman, as images are of material objects. When you hear the sound 'tree'. you at once understand it has a root, a stem, branches, leaves, flowers, fruits, etc. Similarly too, when you hear the sabda (sound) Om it denotes satchidananda Brahman - existence absolute, knowledge absolute, bliss absolute.

Sabda (word) and artha (meaning) are inseparable. All collections of words (speech), terminate in one sound - Om. All objects are denoted by sounds, and all sounds merge in Om. The whole universe comes out of Om and is absorbed into Om. Hence Om is very important. Om should be worshipped. Om should be chanted loudly. Om should be repeated mentally, with deep meaning and feeling. Om should be meditated upon.

Watch the breath. When you inhale, the sound so is produced. When you exhale, the sound ham is produced. You are naturally uttering soham - I am he - or - he am I - with every breath. The breath reminds you that you are in essence identical with the supreme self.

In soham the s and the h are consonants. If you delete them you get oam or om. Consonants depend on vowels for their existence. S and h represent names and forms, or this universe which is phenomenal or relative or empirical or dependent existence. Om is the only solid reality. Om is the soul of your breath.

As soon as you sit for meditation chant Om loudly, three, six or twelve times. This drives away worldly thoughts from the mind and removes vikshep (tossing of the mind). Later you may take to the mental repetition of Om.

14 SEPTEMBER - INSTRUCTIONS IN MEDITATION

Just as the light is burning within the hurricane lamp, so also the divine flame is burning from time immemorial in the lamp of your heart. Close your eyes. Merge yourself within the divine flame. Plunge deep into the chambers of your heart. Meditate on this divine flame and become one with the flame of God.

If the wick within the lamp is small, the light will also be small. If the wick is big, the light also will be powerful. Similarly if the jiva (individual soul) is pure, if he practises meditation, the manifestation of the self will be powerful. He will radiate a big light. Likewise the purer the soul, the greater the expression.

If the magnet is powerful, it will influence the iron filings even when they are placed at a distance. Even so, if the yogi is an advanced person, he will have greater influence over the persons with whom he comes in contact. He can exert his influence on persons even when they live in distant places.

During meditation note how long you can shut out all worldly thoughts. Watch the mind. Try to increase the period. Fill the mind with thoughts of God again and again.

In meditation do not strain the eyes. Do not strain the brain. Do not struggle or wrestle with the mind. Relax. Gently allow divine thoughts to flow. Steadily think of lakshya (point of meditation). Do not voluntarily and violently drive away the intruding thoughts. Have sublime (satvic) thoughts. The vicious thoughts will vanish by themselves.

If there is much strain in your meditation reduce the duration of each sitting for a few days. Those who meditate for four or five hours at a stretch can have two meditative poses. Keep the spine erect.

You must daily increase your vairagya (dispassion) and meditation on satvic virtues such as patience, perseverance, mercy, love and forgiveness. Vairagya and good qualities help meditation. Meditation increases the satvic qualities .

15 SEPTEMBER - THE GLIMPSE AND THE GOAL

When you get a flash of illumination, do not be frightened. It will be a new experience of immense joy. Do not turn back. Do not give up meditation. Do not stop there. You will have to advance still further. This is only a glimpse of truth. This is not the whole experience. This is not the highest realisation. This is only a new platform. Try to ascend further. Reach the bhuma (the infinite). Now alone you are proof against all temptation. You will drink deep the nectar of immortality. This is the acme or final state. You can take eternal rest now. You need not meditate any further. This is the final goal.

You have within yourself tremendous powers and latent faculties of which you have really never had any conception. You must awaken these dormant powers and faculties by the practice of meditation and yoga. You must develop your will and control your senses and mind. You must purify yourself and practise regular meditation, then only can you become a superman or God man.

Every human being has within himself various potentialities and capacities. He is a magazine of power and knowledge. As he evolves he unfolds new powers, new faculties, new qualities. Now he can change his environment and influence others. He can subdue others' minds. He can conquer internal and external nature. He can enter into superconscious state.

The wise cut asunder the knot of egoism by the sharp sword of constant meditation. Then dawns supreme knowledge of the self or full illumination or self-realisation. The liberated sage has neither doubt nor delusion. All bonds of karma (action) are rent asunder. This is the master-key to open the realms of eternal bliss. It may be tiring in the beginning, because the mind will be running away from the point (laksya) every now and then. But after some time it will be focused in the centre. You will be immersed in divine bliss.

16 SEPTEMBER - ON SECLUSION

As the will power in many persons has become very weak, as they had no religious discipline or training in schools and colleges when they were young, and as they are under the sway of materialistic influences, it is necessary for them to go in for seclusion for some weeks, months or years, to practise rigorous japa (repetition of God's name) and undisturbed meditation.

Calm the bubbling emotions, sentiments, instincts and impulses through silent meditation. You can give a new orientation to your feelings by systematic practice. You can entirely transmute your worldly nature into divine nature. You can exercise supreme control over the nerve centres, the nerves, the muscles, the five koshas (sheaths), emotions, impulses and instincts through meditation.

Those who have fixed up their sons in life, who have retired from service and those who have no ties in the world can remain in seclusion for four or five years and practise intense meditation and tapas (austerity) for purification and self-realisation. When they have attained self-knowledge, they should come out and share their knowledge and bliss with others. They should disseminate knowledge of the self through lectures, conversations, discourses or heart-to-heart talks.

A house-holder (grhasta) with yogic tendencies and spiritual inclinations can practise meditation in a solitary and quiet room in his own house, Or in any solitary place on the banks of any holy river, during holidays or throughout the year if he is a whole-time aspirant or if he is retired from service.

The aspirant should be free from hope, desire and greed. Then only will he have a steady mind. Hope, desire and greed make the mind ever restless and turbulent; they are the enemies of peace and self-knowledge. He should not have many possessions. He can keep only those articles which are absolutely necessary for the maintenance of his body. If there are many possessions the mind will be ever thinking of the articles and attempting to protect them. Those who want quick progress in meditation during seclusion should not keep any connection with the world by way of correspondence, reading newspapers or thinking of the family members and possessions.

17 SEPTEMBER - YOGA OF MEDITATION

O beloved Ram! You are within a strong fortress now. A spiritual fortress where no temptation can influence you. You are absolutely safe. Now you can do vigorous sadhana (spiritual practice)

without fear. Kill the foe - the mind. Wear the spiritual laurels of peace, equal-vision and contentment.

You are already shining with Brahmic bliss. The all-merciful Lord has given you all sorts of comforts, good health and a guru to guide you. What more do you want? Grow. Evolve. Realise the truth and proclaim it everywhere.

Be silent. Know thyself. Know that. Melt the mind in that. Truth is quite clear and simple. Solitude and intense meditation are two important requisites for self-realisation. If sadhana is interrupted, make up the deficiency later.

Practise self-restraint at all times because, all of a sudden, the senses may suddenly become turbulent. This is why Krishna says: "O son of Kunti, the excited senses of even a wise man, though he be striving, impetuously carry away his mind."

The wandering habit of the mind must be controlled by making it stick to one place, by one method of sadhana, by one guru and by one form of yoga. A rolling stone gathers no moss. When you take up a book for study, you must finish it before you take up another one. When you take up any work, you must devote your whole-hearted attention towards it and finish it before you take up any other work.

Do not cause pain or suffering to any living being, whether through greed, selfishness, irritability or annoyance. Give up anger and ill-will. Give up the spirit of fighting and heated debates. Do not argue. If you quarrel with somebody you cannot meditate for three or four days, because your balance of mind is upset. Thus much energy is wasted in useless channels. Also the blood becomes hot; the nerves are shattered. Keep a serene mind always. Meditation proceeds from a serene mind.

An aspirant must be sensitive and yet possess a body and nerves completely under control. The greater the sensitivity becomes, the more difficult the task. Noises which pass unnoticed by an ordinary person are torture to one who is very sensitive. Develop the inner power of the self. Centralisation of ideas will stop the out-going habit of the mind.

18 SEPTEMBER - SAMADHI

Still the waves of the mind and hold it steady in nirvikalpa samadhi (unconditioned state of superconsciousness). This needs constant, protracted practice of meditation. There may be breaks in the meditation in the beginning but practice, makes you perfect. Later you will be able to remain absorbed in meditation for long periods. You can merge yourself in samadhi, with a mind like a flame protected from wind.

Before getting sanguine success in meditation get victory over the pose first. Sit upon your seat with the steadiness of a rock - for two or three hours. If the body is steady then the mind will also be steady.

Do not mistake a little concentration or one-pointedness of mind for samadhi. Simply because you have risen a little above body consciousness, on account of a little concentration, do not think that you have attained samadhi.

Separate the mind from the body and unite it with the supreme self. This is known as samadhi or the superconscious state. This will give liberation or freedom from births and deaths. Samadhi is obtained by practice for a long time and with zeal and enthusiasm.

Samadhi is the highest goal which one can attain through meditation. It is not a little thing that can be attained through a little practice. To attain samadhi one should observe strict brahmacharya (celibacy), dietic restrictions and one must have purity of heart.

If these are not attained there is no possibility of attaining samadhi. These are preliminary qualifications and should be well grasped. Then only one should try to enter the portals of samadhi. None can enter there unless he is a great devotee of the Lord.

Moksha (liberation) is loss of one's personality in the divine. It is deliverance from the delusion of personality. Just as the river becomes the ocean itself, the individual soul becomes the mighty supreme soul, with higher consciousness, transcendental bliss and knowledge.

19 SEPTEMBER - SAMADHI - TRUE AND FAKE

Do not mistake deep sleep for samadhi. The glory of the state of turiya is ineffable. Its splendour is indescribable. If the body is light, if the mind is clear, if there is cheerfulness, know that you are meditating. If the body is heavy, the mind dull, know that you are sleeping while meditating.

There is always a complaint among aspirants : "I have been meditating for the last twelve years and I have not made any improvement, any realisation. What is the matter?" They have not plunged themselves in deep meditation in the innermost recesses of their hearts. They have not properly saturated the mind with thoughts of God. They have not done regular, systematic sadhana (practice). They have not disciplined the indriyas (senses) properly. They have not collected all the out-going rays of the mind. They have not made the self-determination that : "I will realise God this very second". They have not given the whole mind to God. They have not kept up an increasing flow of divine consciousness.

Even if you do not feel any pulse in the sadhaka (seeker) when he is in meditation, even if the breathing stops, do not think that he is in nirvikalpa samadhi (unconditioned state) - if he is, he will return with super-sensual divine knowledge - then only can it be said that he has attained real samadhi. Breathing and pulse may stop from various other causes as well.

The sadhaka must have perfect awareness in meditation. There is not much gain if he remains in mere jada (inert) state, even though he is insensible to external sounds.

O aspirant, struggle hard. Make sincere efforts. Meditate regularly and systematically. Enough of heated discussions and heated debates. Retire into a solitary room. Close your eyes. Have deep silent meditation. Feel God's presence. Repeat His name - Om - with fervour, joy and love. Fill your heart with prem. Destroy thoughts, whims, fancies and desires when they arise on the surface of the mind.

Withdraw the wandering mind. Fix it on the Lord. Now meditation will become deep and intense. Do not open your eyes. Do not stir from your seat. Merge in him. Dive deep in the recesses of your heart. Plunge into the shining atman. Drink the nectar of immortality. Enjoy the silence. Peace. Silence. Glory.

20 SEPTEMBER - THE LIBERATED SAGE

If the vasanas (tendencies) and the attachment to objects of the world vanish entirely, and if you are in that immovable state, then you have become a jivanmukta (liberated sage). You will abide in your own self. You will rest in that non-dual, supreme seat. The jnana-vision will arise in you, the light of wisdom will shine unobscured, like the sun in the absence of clouds. You will never be attracted to any worldly objects now. You will be absolutely freed from delusion and sorrow.

You will actually feel that the self alone pervades and permeates everywhere in the world. You will shine with Brahmic effulgence. You will possess equal-vision and a balanced mind. You will be free from longing for sensual objects because the mind will always remain cool with Brahmic bliss. You will be bathed in the cool ambrosial nectar that dribbles from the contented and quiet mind.

Advanced aspirants should stop all sorts of work and study of religious books, if they want to enter into samadhi quickly. They should observe mauna and remain in a solitary place on the banks of the Ganges, the Yamuna or any other suitable river. They should live on one and a half pints of milk alone, or they should live on milk and fruits alone. They should plunge themselves into samadhi in right earnest.

They should reduce sleep to two or three hours. They should start the practice at the beginning of winter. There is real rest in meditation - it is far superior to that rest obtained in deep sleep. Sound sleep for an hour or even half an hour will suffice the man who meditates regularly.

Samadhi, moksha (liberation), turiya (transcendental state), are synonomous terms. Samadhi means superconsciousness. In samadhi the meditator is conscious of his own self. Moksha is freedom from birth and death. It is the attainment of the state of 'paramananda' (supreme bliss). It is freedom from all sorts of pains. Turiya transcends the three states - the waking state, the dream state and the deep sleep state - and so it is called the fourth state.

21 SEPTEMBER - NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI

The state of samadhi is beyond the reach of mind and speech. Even in worldly experience, you cannot express taste. You cannot express the taste of an apple to one who has not tasted it, nor can you explain the nature of colour to a blind man. The state of samadhi is all joy, bliss and peace; this much only can be said. One has to feel this for himself.

In samadhi or the superconscious state, the meditator loses his individuality and becomes identical with the supreme self. He becomes an embodiment of bliss, peace and knowledge. So much only can be said. This can be experienced by you through constant meditation.

Nirvikalpa samadhi is the state of superconsciousness or godhead. There is no vikalpa or imagination of any sort in this condition. This is the goal of life. All mental activities cease now. The function of the intellect and the ten indriyas. (senses) cease entirely.

The spiritual aspirant now rests in atman (self). There is no distinction between subject and object. The world and the pairs of opposites vanish absolutely. This is a state beyond all relativity - though it is not a state of inertia. It is a condition of complete, perfect awareness. It is indescribable. It must be felt and experienced by the aspirant himself. In this state the triad - the knower, known and knowable - disappears. Man is now Brahman - there is no jivahood.

Try to enjoy that sleepless state wherein all senses and mind remain in a state of quietude and the intellect ceases functioning. The sleepless sleep is maha nidra (the superconscious state). There is no waking from this sleep.

In samadhi the yogi gets himself merged in the Lord. All limitations and differences disappear. The yogi attains highest knowledge and bliss. This state is beyond description. You will have to realise it yourself.

Samadhi is the superconscious state in which the veil of ignorance is suddenly lifted and the devotee merges in the overwhelming glory of the one true divine effulgence. In samadhi the soul becomes loosened from its material prison and is separated from individual consciousness. An ecstatic feeling of oneness arises and the soul becomes absorbed in the infinite intelligence from which it emanated.

After attaining samadhi a man, though possessed of great spiritual powers, does not wish to change the conditions and circumstances in which he lived before attaining it. In samadhi, ordinary consciousness has flowered into superconsciousness. The stream of samsara (the stream of births and deaths) has ceased to flow.

22 SEPTEMBER - A TREE WITHOUT ROOTS

There is a mysterious tree,
It has no roots.
It has grown without a seed,
It bears fruits without flowers,
It has no branches, no leaves,
It has no pith, no stem.
Many birds are sitting on this tree.
It is a very ancient tree,
It is beginningless and endless;
It is causeless,
It never dries up,
It cannot be cut by axe.
It gives shelter to millions;
It is vijnana-vrksa (tree of pure knowledge).
It gives immortality,
It is superior to kalpaka vriksha (wish-fulfilling tree).
Thus sayeth Sivananda

MY AUSPICIOUS DAY

I celebrated this auspicious day
with great éclat and pomp,
With illumination and joyful songs.
My wish has been fulfilled.
I have met my Beloved.
How shall I find words
For the beauty of my Beloved?
He is brilliant like millions of suns,
He has enthroned himself in my heart.
The lamp of love burns lustrously.
I bathed Him with the water of love,
I adorned Him with the flowers of prem (love),
I gave him butter and sugar-candy.
I have drunk the cup of love,
Which is filled to the brim;
It is the cup of perfect joy,
My rapture wells forth.
The mercy of my Lord has come upon me.
How blessed am I
Who have seen my Beloved.
So says Sivananda

23 SEPTEMBER - WORK WORK WORK

Do not talk of vedanta and Brahman,
Work, work, work.
There is too much talk and vedantic gossiping,
Enough of tall talk and gossiping.
Give up lecturing and pedantry,
Become a practical vedantin.
Be good to others, even at the point of a bayonet.
Show your strength and courage now.
Develop a soft heart,
That can melt at the sufferings of others,
This will lead you to the realisation of unity.
I want fiery young men –
Brave, dispassionate and wise,
With iron will and ferro-concrete body and nerves,
Who can pulverise the Himalayas,
Who can sip the waters of the ocean,
Who can devour death like a pickle,
Who can swim across the Pacific,
Who can uproot Mount Everest,
Who can swallow the ball of fire.
Thus sayeth Sivananda
TAKE A DOSE OF DIVINE DRUG

O Man! Take a dose of this mysterious drug.
The wonderful drug that grows within,
The drug that cures the disease of death –
The drug of life, light and bliss,
The drug that bestows immortality.
The divine drug, the drug of grace,
The drug that makes you dance in joy,
The rarest drug that dispels the darkness,
The loveliest drug that is precious,
The only drug that removes grief,
The drug that kills the six passions,
The drug that makes you fearless,
The drug that puts you into samadhi.
It is the silent drug Bhumi,
thy innermost atman.
That is my strength, joy and cure-all,
That is the potential immortal elixir.
Thus sayeth Sivananda

24 SEPTEMBER - IMMORTAL ABODE

There, the Brahman dwells by Himself;
There, He sits without support;
There, there is neither day nor night;
There, there is neither virtue nor vice;
There, there is neither light nor dark;
There, the sun and moon do not rise;
There, pain and suffering do not enter;
There, death cannot blow his trumpet;
There, hunger and disease cannot torment;
There, nobody sleeps or wakes.
It is a city of deathlessness.
It is the abode of fearlessness.
It is the seat of eternal bliss.
It is Brahma Nirvana or Paramamgati.
Sivananda says: "Meditate on Brahman, on the spot
Where the Ganges and the Jamuna meet;
And rest peacefully, for ever".

HAPPINESS IS WITHIN

The musk is in the navel of the deer;
But it runs here and there to smell it.
The chain is on the neck of the damsel;
But she runs hither and thither to search for it.
The tenth man is there in reality;
But he forgets to count himself and cries.
Fresh butter is with you in abundance;
And yet you go here and there in search of ghee.
The precious diamond is within you;
But you run after the broken glass-pieces in vain.
The key is in your pocket;
But you are searching for it in vain, here and there.
Even so the ocean of bliss is within you,
And yet you run here and there in search for it.
The Sun of suns is ever-shining in you;
But your blind eyes cannot behold it.
The eternal sound is ringing within you;
But your deaf ears cannot hear it.
Sivananda says: "Look within and meditate,
And enjoy the eternal bliss of atman."

25 SEPTEMBER - SIT IN SILENCE

I am neither male nor female;
I am neither dvaita (dualism) nor advaita (non-dualism);
I am neither saguna (with qualities) nor nirguna (without qualities);
I am neither seer nor hearer;
I am neither body nor mind;
I am neither far nor near;
I am neither black nor red;
I am neither thin nor stout;
I live neither by food nor by air;
I neither move nor stop;
I shall neither go to hell nor to heaven;
I neither laugh nor weep;
I work and yet I do not work;
I hear without ears and see without eyes;
I smell without nose and taste without tongue;
Few understand Me.
He who understands Me, sits in silence.
Sivananda says: "Mysterious is that silence.
Drown yourself in that silence And be happy."
COME OUT OF YOUR MEDITATION

O Fool! What are you doing in the room?
Why have you shut the doors?
Are you meditating or building sand castles?
Are you planning or sleeping?
What do you see with closed eyes?
Darkness? Or some white spots?
Is this your vision of God?
Do not waste this precious human life.
See God everywhere - in the sun
In the trees, the child, the cow,
In the breeze, in the old man,
In the running brooks, in the landscapes.
He is not within your trikuti (eyebrow centre) alone.
Can you meditate for twenty-four hours?
Do not become tamasic or lazy.
Do not mistake tamas (inertia) for satva (divinity).
Enough, enough of your meditation.
Thy cells are charged with heavy tamas.
Come out and serve God in all forms.
Here is a dynamic path of cosmic vision.
So says Sivananda

26 SEPTEMBER - MUSIC OF SILENCE

Hear the music of the meeting of the soul with soul –
It is the divine music, thrilling and soul-stirring.
It is the music that gives rapturous ecstasy.
The light of this music illumines the world.
It is the source of all vocal music,
It is the source of all musical instruments,
It is the music of that supreme silence,
It is the music of the flute of Sri Krishna,
It is the music that delights Radha,
It is the music without stringing and playing,
It is the music of the sahasrara (thousand-petal led) lotus.
Sivananda says: "Listen to me, brother,
There are only a few
Who have heard this music of silence".

THYSELF KNOWEST THYSELF

We cannot know thy nature.
Thou alone knowest what thou art,
Thyself knowest Thyself, by Thyself.
The mind cannot reach Thee –
What can poor understanding know?
Speech cannot reach so far,
The power of thought fails.
Thou art not a mental concept,
You cannot be confined Within the walls of the mind –
Thou art infinite. Ascetics practise pancagni tapas ("five-fire austerity"),
Hatha yogis stop their breath
And practise tratak (gazing).
By devotion alone
You can be known in essence.
Only a few blessed ones
Have realized Thee,
Only through thy grace.
So says Sivananda

27 SEPTEMBER - HERE RAINS NECTAR

My heart drinks the nectar now,
I have plunged myself in that ocean of joy,
I have drunk the cup of immortal bliss.
There is neither doubt nor sorrow here.
The terror of death is no more.
There is the sweet fragrance of the soul.
The music of the soul sounds itself.
Supreme freedom reigns here,
Brilliant effulgence streams forth,
There is the unstruck, sweet melody of harmony.
This is the sorrowless land of an old man.
The thirst of the five senses is quenched here.
Here the rain of nectar pours and pours,
The sacred stream of the Jamuna-ganga
Flows here perennially.
The round of births and deaths ceases here.
Come, come my sweet companions,
Visit this limitless domain but once
And see my supreme Lord's Durbar (court).
So says Sivananda
OCEAN OF SWEETNESS

I have found the key of the mystery.
There is wonderful rest in the land of bliss.
Wonderful is the sorrowless land.
It is an infinite ocean of sweetness.
Look within and rest peacefully.
The three forms of misery are no more,
The five kinds of afflictions are not here.
One becomes speechless and silent –
There is stupendous silence.
The seer, seen and sight have become one.
The knower, known and knowable are one.
There is the divine music of the supreme harmony
Without the play of fingers and strings.
One enjoys freedom and perfection.
Bliss is filled to the very brim.
I have realized oneness -So says Sivananda

28 SEPTEMBER - SHOWER THY GRACE

O Lord, if thou art the sun,
I am thy ray.
If thou art the ocean,
I am the drop.
If thou art the lotus,
I am the petal.
If thou art the tree,
I am the leaf.
There is no other Lord like thee –
Thou art the ocean of compassion.
I have no qualification
And yet Thou hast blessed me.
By singing Thy name
I have broken all fetters,
I have cut Yama's noose.
Sivananda sings to obtain Thy grace.

THOU ART MY SUPPORT

O Lord, Thou alone art my mind and senses.
Thou art my tongue, ears and eyes.
Thou art my prana, (the vital breath).
Thou alone dwellest in my heart.
Thou alone abideth in my breath.
Thou fillest my whole body.
Thou art the life within me.
Thou art the prompter of my thoughts.
Thou art the inner ruler.
Thou movest all the internal organs.
Thou illumineth my intellect.
Thou art my all in all.
Thou art my very soul.
Thou art the soul of my soul.
I have none but Thee.
Thou alone art my real friend.
Thou art my guru, my father and my mother. ---So says Sivananda
Thou art my sole refuge,
I long for Thy grace alone.
Thou art the knower and the teacher,
Thou art the knowledge that knows,
Thou art the ultimate truth –
That is known or realised ---So says Sivananda

29 SEPTEMBER - COME TO ME

I want only Thee, my Lord.
When the senses hiss and drag me,
Come to me and crush them.
When I am overworked and tired,
Come to me with Thy peace and harmony.
When my mind becomes turbulent,
Come to me with Thy yoga power,
And still this boisterous mind.
When desires and cravings attack me,
Come to me with Thy light and grace.
When fear overpowers me,
Come to me with Thy courage.
When avidya (ignorance) tries to overwhelm me,
Come to me with Thy supreme wisdom.
Thus sayeth Sivananda

SECRET OF LOVE

Subtle and profound is the path of love.
It is like the edge of a sharp razor.
But the true lover treads it easily.
His grace renders his path smooth.
There is no asking or bargaining there,
It is all sacrifice and self-surrender.
It is the out-pouring of the heart's love
At the lotus feet of the Lord.
Egoism is burnt in the fire of love,
Desires are destroyed in the flame of love.
Two have become one now.
The lover plunges himself
In the ocean of divine love,
He immerses himself
In the sea of divine joy.
He offers his all in the Lord's service,
His tan (body), man (mind), dhan (wealth) –
This is the secret of this love.
Thus sayeth Sivananda

30 SEPTEMBER - SONG OF ADMONITION

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.
Radhe Shyama Radhe Shyama Shyama Shyama Radhe Radhe
Radhe Krishna Radhe Krishna Krishna Krishna Radhe Radhe
Gouri Sankar Gouri Sankar Sankar Sankar Gouri Gouri
Uma Sankar Uma Sankar Sankar Sankar Uma Uma.
my Jesus O Lord Jesus Hail Hail Jesus O Father Father
O my Mary O Virgin Mary Hail Hail Mary O Mother Mother
O my Buddha O Lord Buddha Hail Hail Buddha O Saviour Saviour
O my Allah O Lord Allah Hail Hail Allah O Father Father
O my Shakti O Adi Shakti Hail Hail Shakti O Mother Mother.

Is there not a nobler mission than eating, drinking and sleeping?
It is difficult to get a human birth, therefore try your best to realise in this birth.
Fie on that wretch, woe to that man, who wastes all his life in sensual pleasures.
Time sweeps away kings and barons –
Where is Yudhistra? Where is Asoka? Where is Shakespeare?
Where is Valmiki? Where is Napoleon? Where is Shivaji?
Be up and doing (in) Yogic Sadhana, you will enjoy Supreme bliss.
Be up and doing (in) Brahma Vichar, you will attain Immortality (Kaivalya Moksha).
Can you expect real Santi if you waste your time in idle gossiping?
Can you enjoy Supreme Peace if you waste your time in novels and newspapers?
in fights and quarrels?
in scandal backbiting?
Am I not Thou? Art Thou not I? One alone is therefore true
When the mind melts in the silence, you will have self-realisation.
What have you learnt, tell me frankly from the Bihar and Quetta earthquakes?
Have you got now real Vairagya? Do you practise Japa and Kirtan?
Can you expect real santi if you waste your time in cards and cinemas?
When your throat is choked at the time of death who will help you for your salvation?
(Hare Rama Hare Rama .....)

1 OCTOBER - SONG OF A KARMA YOGIN

Hari ke premi Hari Hari bolo
Avo pyare milker gawo
Hari charaname dhyana laghavo
Dukhme sukhme Hari Hari bolo
Abhiman tyago seva karo
Narayan Narayan Narayan Narayan.

Give up Brahmin, Sanyas abhiman,
Give up male-female, sex abhiman.
Give up doctor, judge abhiman,
Give up Rajah, Zamindar abhiman.

Relinquish pundit, scientist abhiman
Crush this professor, engineer abhiman
Kill this collector, thasildar abhiman.

Kill this vairagya, Seva abhiman
Kill this Tyagi, Kartritva abhiman.
(Narayan Narayan ....)

Remember always Hari Hari Hari Hari,
Sing always Sita-Ram, Radheshyam,
See good in every face,
Share what you have with others.
Develop nicely adaptability
Serve always with Narayana Bhav.
Scrutinise always your inner motives
Work without egoism,
Cultivate the Nimitta-Bhav,
Give up expectation of fruits.

Surrender always fruits to the Lord,
Have equal vision and balanced mind.
Selfless work will purify your heart,
Then you will get knowledge of self.
(Narayan Narayan .....)

2 OCTOBER - ANNIHILATE THE EGO

Study the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi. He never made any difference between menial service and dignified work. Scavenging or cleaning the latrines were the highest yoga for him, the highest puja. He annihilated his illusory little ‘ego’ through this service.

Many highly educated persons joined his ashram to learn yoga under him. They thought that Gandhiji would teach them yoga in some mysterious manner, in a private room. They thought that he would teach them pranayama, meditation, awakening of the kundalini, etc. They were asked to clean the latrines first.

Gandhiji used to mend his own shoes. He himself used to grind the flour. He would take upon himself the work of others when they were unable to do their allotted portion of work. When an educated person, a new ashramite, felt shy to do grinding work, Gandhiji himself would do the work in front of him. And then the man would willingly do the work the next day.

Try to do daily as many virtuous actions as possible. When you go to sleep have a review of your day's actions. Mark them in your spiritual diary. Performance of virtuous actions is the beginning of spiritual life.

Repeat mentally or silently with the breath, the Lord's name - such as Hari Om, Sri Ram, or your own ishta mantra. Do this even when you are working in the office: A strong habit of repetition of the mantra will soon be formed.

Karma, according to Jaimini Rishi, is the performance of agnihotra and other vedic rituals. According to the Gita any action done with nishkamya bhava (unselfishly, motivelessly), is karma yoga. Lord Krishna says: "Work incessantly. Your duty is to work but not to expect the fruits thereof." The central teaching of the Gita is non-attachment to work. Breathing, eating, seeing, hearing, thinking, etc., are all karmas.

Service of your guru or a mahatma (saint) is the highest form of karma yoga. This purifies your heart quickly. Contact with a great soul or guru has immense advantages. You will benefit by the magnetic aura of the great personage. You will draw inspiration from him.

3 OCTOBER - SONG OF MEDITATION

Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram
Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram
Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram
Ram Ram Ram Ram

Truth is Brahman, truth is your own self,
Realise this truth, be free, be free, be free, be free.
You must have a pure mind, if you want to realise
Practise karma yoga, be pure, be pure, be pure, be pure.

You cannot enjoy peace of mind
And cannot practise meditation
If you are passionate, kill this lust, kill this lust.
Be regular in your meditation,
And take Satvic food,
You will have peace of mind, this is the Truth, this is the Truth.

When you meditate on Hari, keep His picture in front of you,
Look at it with a steady gaze, you will develop concentration.
If evil thoughts enter the mind,
Do not drive them forcibly,
Substitute divine thoughts, they will pass away, they will pass away.

Meditation leads to knowledge, meditation kills pains,
Meditation brings peace, meditate, meditate, meditate, meditate.
Samadhi is union with God, this follows meditation.
You will attain immortality, this is moksha, this is moksha.

SONG OF EIGHTEEN 'ITIES'
Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,
Sincerity, simplicity, veracity.
Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability,
Adaptability, humility, tenacity,
Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,
Charity, generosity, purity.
Practise daily these eighteen 'ities',
You will soon attain immortality.
Brahman is the only real entity,
Mr. So and So is a false non-entity,
You will abide in eternity and infinity,
You will behold unity in diversity,
You cannot attain this in the university.

4 OCTOBER - I AM SIVA

I am Siva, the life and soul of all. I am the substratum for all the forms of the world. I am the substratum for the mind, prana (life) and senses. I am the energy in the atoms and the elements. I am the effulgence of the sun, moon and stars. I am the beauty of beauties. I am the charm and beauty in women. I am the life of all youth. I am the intelligence in all scientists, educationalists, culturists, research scholars and philosophers.

I am the foundation of the world. I am the wisdom of the sages. I am the siddhis (powers) in yogis. I am the life of the cyclones, earthquakes and volcanoes. I am the energy in dynamos. I am the energy in all germs and microbes. I am the power in herbs, minerals and tonics. I am goodness, truth, success and prosperity. I am Siva, the life and soul of all.

Lumbago and rheumatism shake my body. All diseases are my guests. Let them stay. What is that to me? I welcome them cordially. I always sing: "I am not this body, not this mind. “Cidananda rupah sivoham sivoham". I defy, deny diseases. What is it to be if the body perishes? I am anamaya (diseaseless) atman (self). I am the life of this cosmic play.

I have burnt up all duality. I am sat-cidananda. I have drunk the cup of pure knowledge - it is all sweet nectar. There are neither vrittis (thought-waves) nor vasanas (tendencies) in the absolute. There is neither thought nor world here. I have experienced this supreme state - it is neither dual nor non-dual. It is only keval asti (pure being). It is pure consciousness or supreme essence.

KNOW THE ATMAN: If atmic reality is cognised then all differences between trees, mountains, clothes and ‘others', will vanish. With them sankalpas (thoughts) will also be swept away. The only way out of grief and delusion is the inner realisation of the unity of the individual soul with Brahman (the absolute). The atman is to be known - there is no attainment higher than that. One fears not death who has realised Brahman, who is serene, ageless, self-luminous, desireless, firm, immortal and self-existent.

5 OCTOBER - STRIVE

Strive. Strive to realise God. This is the purpose of human birth. The perfection of the realisation of absolute knowledge, supreme bliss and immortality is the one and only goal in human life. Release from the round of births and life in eternity is the goal of man. Till self-realisation is attained, man is subject to the law of karma and rebirth. Finish your task --- God-realisation in this life itself; do not postpone it. Just as food is necessary for the body so also daily meditation and prayer are necessary for the soul.

O man! Wake up from this slumber of ignorance. Why do you waste your life building castles in the air? Turn your gaze within. Stop all this hurry and worry. Sit down and relax. Dive deep within. Discover the pearl of atman. You will be freed from birth and death here and now.

Remember the goal every moment of this life. Strive incessantly to realize it by living a life of detachment, dispassion, devotion, deep meditation and samadhi (self knowledge).

O man! Nothing is permanent. All things change. All things pass away. Seek the permanent, changeless, immortal atman and be free. He is truly wise who lives in the eternal and who is endowed with discrimination and dispassion.

Life is a transforming process by which attachment, fear, anger, hatred and lust are transformed by steady and rigorous discipline and meditation into joy, bliss, peace and love.

In simplicity is the secret of real beauty. Simplify your life. Be humble, pure, straight forward and true to yourself and others. Be good and do good so that each tomorrow will find you farther than today. Be humble, be meek, be pure, be holy, be godly and peaceful. Be charitable. Be moral. Be humble. Be courageous. Be pure. Meditate. Become wise. Whoever does anything with enthusiasm, patience and perseverance, never fails to achieve his object. Annihilate desires.

Seek the company of saints and devotees. Control the mind. Control anger. Be charitable. Help the needy. Kill the ego. Be grateful. Respect the great. Be truthful. Indulge not in gossip. You will attain the supreme blessedness.

6 OCTOBER - REALISE THY TRUE NATURE

First, learn to know yourself, the true value of your own character. Then alone you will be able to serve humanity and benefit people. You are taintless, tranquil, pure consciousness; you are beyond nature. All this time you have been duped by illusion, maya.

Know one individual (yourself) correctly - and you can know the whole world. To know thy self, is to know God. Seek perfection, freedom and eternal bliss in the atman or self, by the self and through the self. Talk only of the atman. Purify, meditate, lose yourself in Brahman or the absolute and you will find your self, you will know your self.

Nobody doubts his own existence, though he may doubt the existence of God. Find the truth, the source of your own self and then you will know everything. The more you know the more you will grow in humility. I climbed the peak of vedanta and merged in the Light of Lights. How can I express it? To express the unspeakable - all words are feeble. I am the witness - the eternal, pure, infinite, internal self. I am Siva himself. I am changeless. None of the things of the world have touched me, will ever touch me. I have no moods - I am beyond moods. I am the blissful atman. The light which illumines the intellect, the sun, the moon, the stars and also yonder lamp, is bliss eternal. That light am I. Om.

If you find you need a place of perfect security and peace then come, sit in my heart and be one with me. There is a central harmony within you, a wisdom, a spirit of wholeness which is divine. That is immortal atman, your own innermost soul or self. Dwell in this atman. Realise this atman and be free for ever. The atman or supreme self must be realised. This is practical religion.

Open the eye of your heart,
Enjoy the vision of the Lord.
Break the seal of your ego,
Realise the eternal bliss of the self.
Clean the dirt of your mind's mirror,
Behold the beauty of the majestic atman.
Sit on the horse of brahmakara vritti.
Reach your destination; the home of eternal peace.
Still the waves of the mind,
Take a dip in the ocean of bliss,
Shut up your mouth and the mouth of the mind
And enjoy the peace of supreme silence.

7 OCTOBER - PERSEVERE IN SADHANA

Let the sadhana (spiritual practice) always be regular, continuous, unbroken and earnest. Not only regularity but also continuity in sadhana and meditation are necessary if you want to attain self-realisation quickly.

A spiritual stream, once set going, does not dry up unless the channel-bed gets blocked, unless there is stagnation. Be vigilant eternally. Meditate regularly. Annihilate the under-current of vasana (habit-patterns).

Patience, perseverance, courage, determination, discrimination and dispassion are needed to tread the spiritual path. Put away thoughts, stimuli, perceptions, intentions, emotions, feelings, preoccupations and deliberations arising out of the senses and the sense objects.

You will attain supreme blessedness or the peace of the eternal. Keep the flame of thy aspiration ever kindled bright. Let purity, serenity, compassion, truth and oneness, manifest in thy thoughts and actions. Through penance, prayer and meditation the soul ascends on the divine chariot, to the realms of infinite bliss, to God's halls of wisdom.

Regularity is of paramount importance in spiritual practice. Spiritual aspirants must be arduous and efficient in performing their tasks without a break. Pray without a break. Have unshakable faith.

Remember vairagya (dispassion) and abhyasa (constant practice). Prayer is the wing by which you fly to God. Meditation or intuition is the eye by which you see God. Pray fervently unto the Lord. Pray for the Lord's light and guidance.

Meditate on the great truth within. Strive ever to keep thyself close to the divine centre. Day by day draw nearer unto the Lord. Strive inwardly to grow into the likeness of the divine ideal.

8 OCTOBER - WHAT IS VEDANTA

Om. Vedanta is that bold philosophy which teaches the unity of life or oneness of consciousness. It is that supreme philosophy which boldly proclaims, with emphasis and force, that this little jiva (human being) is identical with the eternal or absolute. It is that sublime philosophy which elevates the mind at once to magnanimous heights of Brahmanhood, divine splendour and glory, which makes a man absolutely fearless, which destroys all barriers that separate man from man and which brings concord, unruffled peace and harmony to suffering humanity. It is the only philosophy that can really unite (on the basis of one common self in all) a Hindu and a Mohammedan, a Catholic and a Protestant, an Irishman and an Englishman, a Jain and a Parsee, in a common platform and in the core of their own hearts also. It is the only philosophy that, when properly understood and practised, can put a definite stop to world wars and all sorts of dissensions, splits and skirmishes that exist in nations and communities.

Vedanta is a magnetic healing balm for the wounded and the afflicted in the dreadful battlefield of this dire samsara (phenomenal existence). Vedanta is the divine collyrium which removes the cataract of ignorance and gives a new, inner eye of intuition or wisdom. Vedanta is the direct, royal road to the domain of felicity; it is the supreme abode of immortality and eternal bliss. I is a panacea, a 'cure-all' for those who are being burned by the three fires and the five afflictions of this miserable mundane existence. It is the Himalayan herb that can bring immediate life to a dying man. It lifts a man, at once, to the status of Emperor of emperors, King of kings - even though he has nothing to eat; even though he is clad in rags.

Vedanta gives real spiritual strength; it inspires, renovates, vivifies, invigorates and energises. It eradicates ignorance - the root cause for human sufferings. It puts a stop to the never ending wheel of birth and death and confers immortality, infinite knowledge and bliss. It gives hope to the hopeless, power to the powerless, vigour to the vigourless and joy to the joyless.

Vedanta is the only universal, eternal religion. Vedanta means 'end of the vedas' or the essence of the teaching of the srutis (scriptures).

9 OCTOBER - ESSENCE OF VEDANTA

Vedanta is expressed in the mahavakhyas (great sentences) of the Upanishads as "Tat twam asi" - "thou art that"; "Aham brahma asmi" "I am the self." Vedanta says, "O little man! Do not identify yourself with this perishable body. Give up 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'! Do not hate your neighbour or brother. Do not try to exploit him -he is your own self. There is a common self or common consciousness in all. This is the same in a king and a peasant, in an ant and a dog, in a man and a woman, in a cobbler and a scavenger. This is the real immortal entity. Mind is the dividing principle. It tempts and deludes. Kill this mischievous mind. Control the indriyas (senses) which drag you out to the external objects. Fix the mind in the source. Rise above body and mind. Eradicate desires. Learn to discriminate the real from the unreal. Identify yourself with this immortal, non-dual, self-existent, self-luminous essence. Behold the one self in all. See the one in many. All miseries will come to an end."

Vedanta speaks of the one atman or Brahman or self who exists in the past, the present and the future, who has no beginning, middle and end, who is the support for everything, who is the embodiment of wisdom, peace and bliss. The seers of the Upanishads have expressed their realisation in glowing terms. They have given out their inner experiences after long research and mighty struggle. All these have been collected in the form of the Upanishads. This constitutes the subject of vedanta philosophy.

Although vedanta is the direct royal road that takes one to the goal, it should not be prescribed for all in a wholesale manner. There are four types of aspirants. They are the karmic (active) type, the bhakti (devotional) type, the mystic type and the rational type. Karma yoga should be prescribed for people of karmic tendencies -for the busy and active men who have mala (impurities) in the mind; bhakti yoga for men of devotional temperament - in whom the emotional element predominates; raja yoga for men of mystic temperament; vedanta yoga for men of reason and will - for people of intellectual temperament.

Vichara (enquiry, "Who am I?") can only benefit that aspirant who is free from impurity and tossing of the mind, who is endowed with bold understanding, gigantic and tremendous will, sharp, subtle intellect and the four means. It is certainly not meant for all - it is meant for the select few only who can really understand and realise the full significance or import of vedanta and reap the fruits.

10 OCTOBER - THE GOAL OF VEDANTA

The goal or aim of life is self-realisation which confers immortality, highest bliss, knowledge and supreme peace. Fixing the mind on the source or inner self and getting it absorbed there is the highest yajna (worship), the highest charity, the highest karma (action), the highest bhakti (devotion), the highest yoga or knowledge. Now the little self-arrogating 'I' vanishes. Just as the river joins the ocean, the little self becomes one with the ocean of bliss. With the disappearance of the little illusory 'I' comes the disappearance of 'you', 'he', 'this', 'that', time, space and causation, 'mine' and thine', the pairs of opposites, the ideas of jiva (soul), Ishvara (God), prakrti (nature), etc. The whole world presents itself as atman. This grand vision this magnanimous samadhi (superconsciousness) is atma-darsan (vision of the ultimate reality), which is beyond description. Many have attained this vision - why not you also? Apply diligently right now in its achievement.

There is something dearer than wealth; there is something dearer than wife or son; there is something dearer than your life itself. That dearer something is thy own self (atman), inner ruler (antaryamin), immortal (amritam). He who dwells in this eye, who is within this eye, whose body this eye is, whom the eye does not know, who rules the eye from within, is thy self, inner ruler, immortal.

The vedantic method of meditation on the formula 'anomayoham' (I am all-health) or the enquiry, "Who am I?" is the most efficient, patient and best method for eradication of all disease and ensuring perfect health and a high standard of vigour and vitality. This is the king of all physical cultures. For those aspirants who practise the, "Who am I?" enquiry and who are not able to keep up good health by this method alone I prescribe the practice of asana (posture) and pranayama (yoga breathing).

The aspirant who has got chitta suddhi (pure mind) will only be able to hear the still, small voice of the soul or self. If there is no purity he will certainly mistake the voice of the self. He will be misguided - he will blink and grope in darkness. The help of a realised guru is indispensably requisite in the beginning for the aspirant who treads the path of jnana yoga.

11 OCTOBER - ROOT OUT ATTACHMENT

Atman is Brahman or absolute or infinite or supreme being. It is existence absolute, knowledge absolute and bliss absolute. It is eternal, perfect, pure, self luminous. It is self-delight and self-knowledge. It is bodiless, formless (nirakara) and attributeless (guna-less). It is all-pervading, all-full, imperishable. It has neither beginning nor end. It exists in the present, the past and the future. It is svayambhu (self-existent). It is the source for the body and the mind, prana (life), indriyas (senses), vedas and the universe. No one can deny it because it is the self of all beings.

Selfishness retards spiritual progress. If anyone can destroy his selfishness, half of his spiritual sadhana (practice) is over. No samadhi or meditation is possible without the eradication of this undesirable, negative quality. Aspirants should direct their whole attention in the beginning towards the removal of this dire malady by protracted, selfless, disinterested service.

Never say 'my body', 'my wife', 'my son', 'my house'. Attachment is the root cause for the miseries and sufferings of this world. Discipline the mind carefully. The old habits will creep in - destroy them at the very root. Lead the life of mental non-attachment. This is the master-key to open the realm of Brahmic bliss. Nonattachment is dispassion or indifference to sensual enjoyments.

It is the mind that creates the ideas of 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'. It is the mind that links the body and the jiva (soul) and creates intense deha adhyasa (body-consciousness) and the man thinks, "I am the body". If the binding link in the mind is destroyed you can remain wherever you like - you can roam peacefully, in any part of the world, unattached like water on the lotus leaf. Nothing can bind you. The whole mischief is wrought by the mind.

Introspect. Look within. Try to remove your defects. This is real sadhana (practice) - you will have to do it at any cost. Intellectual development is nothing. But the former needs a great deal of struggle for many years as many vicious habits have to be rent asunder.

Keep up the unbroken current of meditation. Avoid mixing. You will soon get over body-consciousness. A little more drastic sadhana is needed for a month - unbroken silence. Do not allow inertia or laziness to overpower you.

12 OCTOBER - MEDITATION IN VEDANTA

Preliminary meditation for six months: 1. On the blue expansive sky, all-pervading air or ether, or light, or Himalayas, or infinite ocean. 2. On abstract qualities - mercy, patience, generosity, etc. 3. On abstract ideas - indivisibility, existence, wisdom, bliss, truth, eternity, immortality, infinity, purity, etc. Will render the mind subtle and sharp and prepare it for deep abstract meditation on atman.

Just as one thread penetrates all flowers in a garland, so also one self penetrates all these living beings. Behold the one self in all. Serve all. Love all. Give up the idea of diversity. You will be established in Brahman. When one Atman dwells in all living beings, then why do you hate others? Why do you use harsh words? Why do you try to rule and dominate others? Why do you exploit others? Why are you intolerant? Is this not the height of folly; is it not sheer ignorance?

Behold the "One in all". Feel, "I am the all", and "I am in all." Feel, "All bodies are mine; the whole world is my body, my sweet home". Feel, "I work in all hands; I eat in all mouths". Feel, "I am the immortal self in all". Repeat these formulas mentally several times a day. Repeat Om mentally and feel oneness of life or unity of consciousness when you play football or tennis, when you drink and eat, when you talk and sing, when you sit and walk, when you bathe and dress, when you work in the office or answer the calls of nature. Spiritualise every movement, action, thought, feeling. Transmute them into yoga. Gradually names and forms will vanish and you will feel, "Aham asmi" (I exist), The balance or residue left will be atman.

A jnani sees atman everywhere; there is no thought of self; the lower self is entirely annihilated. He lives to serve all. He feels that all is himself only. He has cosmic vision and cosmic feeling. He is free from worry, trouble, difficulties and sorrow. He is always happy and cheerful.

In the formless vedantic meditation of advaitins (non-dualists) there will be an abstract mental image in the beginning of sadhana (practice). This will vanish eventually. When you meditate, deny names and forms, do neti-neti (not this, not this).

13 OCTOBER - BRAHMAN OF VEDANTA

Brahman cannot be approached by argument. He is unknowable. He is without any limiting adjunct. He is the source of the world, vedas, body, mind and prana (life).

Brahman is the only abode of eternal peace and purity. He is the instrumental and material cause for the universe, though He Himself is causeless because He is beginningless and endless. He is one without a second. He is attributeless. He is free from birth and death.

Brahman is absolute, infinite. He is the supreme being. He is the highest self. He has no attachment; He has no connection with anything - He has no connection with bodies, minds, etc. This is his supreme yoga which ordinary mortals can hardly understand.

Brahman dwells in every heart. He is boundless, unfathomable and immeasurable. There is neither subtle desire nor craving nor sense-hankering in Brahman. He is an embodiment of purity. His name or symbol is Om. He is the silent witness of the activities of the world and the activities of all minds. He is imperishable.

Brahman is absolute consciousness, the indwelling atman. He is the one great indivisible bliss - satchidananda. He is awake when people sleep at night. He is the passive spectator of this world-show or cosmic bioscope. The aspirant finds full and eternal satisfaction in Brahman. All his desires melt away like mist or snow before the rising sun.

There is something behind life, matter, energy, mind that is the ultimate reality - it is eternal and unchanging. The finite mind cannot solve certain problems of life and the riddle of the universe. On account of egoism, we perisist in our vain researches and experiments. But our boasted intellect has failed to satisfy our yearnings and equip us with real knowledge that will dispel our ignorance and give us real peace of mind.

We bow our heads before the inner ruler who dwells in the chambers of our hearts, who is the source of matter, life, energy and mind, who is immortal, eternal, bliss absolute, knowledge absolute and existence absolute. May He now give Us real enlightenment. May He grant us that highest knowledge of self through which alone we can get full knowledge of all secular sciences. Our silent salutations to that highest self, the Brahman of the vedanta.

14 OCTOBER - GUIDE TO SADHAKAS

No complete knowledge is possible as long as there is the relationship of subject and object. When the subject and the object merge into absolute union there are no doubts or questions. When you enter the consciousness of the infinite you will have no problems. You will have no questions to ask, for the questioner and the questioned will be one - subject and object will be dissolved.

Only when action is quickened with love and illumined with knowledge, then the pilgrim in the spiritual path finds his destination and end. The one you seek is he who seeks you. The essential craving of the heart is the inner light. He who has faith, he who is tranquil and self-controlled, he who meditates on the atman attains immortality and eternal bliss.

So, reduce your wants to the utmost minimum. Adapt yourself to circumstances. Never be attached to anything or to anybody. Share what you have with others. Be ever ready to serve. Lose no opportunity - serve with atma-bhava (feeling that the self is all). Speak measured and sweet words. Have a burning thirst for God-realisation. Renounce all your belongings and surrender yourself to God.

Keep your soul strong and fresh and give it spiritual food - prayer, japa (repetition of God's name), selfless service, etc. Feed your mind with thoughts of God, your heart with purity, your hands with selfless service. Remain soaked in remembrance of God, with one-pointed mind. Repeat the Lord's name with faith and devotion. Meditate on his form and surrender your heart and soul to him.

Let the thought of God or reality keep away the thought of the world. Forget the feeling that you are so-and-so, that you are a male or a female, by vigorous brahma-chintana (contemplation of God.) Never postpone a thing for tomorrow if it is possible for you to do it today. Do not boast or make a show of your abilities. Be simple and humble. Always be cheerful. Give up worries. Be indifferent to things that do not concern you. Fly away from bad company and discussion. Be alone for a few hours daily.

Control the emotions by discrimination and vairagya (dispassion). Maintain equilibrium of mind always. Give up backbiting and fault-finding. Find out your own faults and weaknesses. See only good in others. Do good to those that hate you. Shun lust, anger, egoism, moha (delusion) and lobha (greed) like venomous cobras.

15 OCTOBER - THE RIDDLE OF THE WORLD

You yourself have made your life complex. You have entangled yourself in this quagmire. You have multiplied your wants and desires. Every day you are forging new links in the chain of bondage. Simplicity has vanished. Luxurious habits are daily developed. People are dying of starvation; there is depression and unrest everywhere. There is devastation by earthquake. The divorce courts are increasing. One nation is afraid of another nation. Life has become a matter of uncertainty. It has become a mass of confusion and bewilderment; it has become stormy and boisterous.

You can escape from these troubles and difficulties if you lead a life of dispassion, self-restraint, purity and selfless service, if you develop cosmic love, if you make a habit of developing the right point of view, right thinking, right feeling, right action, with the right mental attitude and if you practise meditation and devotion.

If you have no sustained vairagya (dispassion) you will find no improvement or progress in spirituality. Vows, energy, austerities and meditation will leak out like water from a cracked pot. You have spent eight hours in sleep and the rest in idle gossiping, telling lies and deceiving others. How can you expect spiritual good or immortality if you do not spend even half an hour in the service of God, in singing his name and in divine contemplation? Is there pain or pleasure in this world? If there is pleasure then why do young educated men retire into the forests?

If there is pain why do young men run after wealth, position and women? Mysterious is maya (illusion)! Mysterious is moha (delusion)! Try to understand the riddle of life and the riddle of the universe. Acquire viveka (wisdom). Have satsanga (holy company). Enquire into the nature of the atman. Study the Yoga Vasishta and the Upanishads. Then you will have a comprehensive understanding of the problems of life. There is not one iota of happiness in this world.

Real freedom is from birth and death. Real freedom is freedom from the trammels of flesh and mind. Real freedom - is freedom from the bonds of karma. Real freedom is freedom from attachment to the body, etc. Real freedom is freedom from desires and from egoism.

16 OCTOBER - BE ONE WITH ALL

Mere intellectual conception of identity or oneness will not serve your purpose. You must actually feel the truth of it through intuition. You must become fully aware of the real self, the basis or substratum or bedrock of this world, body, mind, prana (life) and senses. You must enter into consciousness in which the realisation becomes a part of your every day life. You must live the ideal spiritual life daily. Your neighbours should actually feel that you are an entirely changed being, a superman. They should smell the divine fragrance in you. A full-blown yogi or jnani can never remain incognito. Just as fragrant fumes emanate from scented incense sticks so also spiritual fragrance emanates from the body.

There is no such thing as inanimate matter. There is life in everything. Life is involved in a piece of stone. All matter is vibrant with life - this has been conclusively proved by modern scientists. Smile with the flowers and the green grass. Play with the butterflies, birds and deer. Shake hands with the shrubs, ferns and twigs of trees. Talk to the rainbow, wind, stars and sun. Converse with the running brooks and the waves of the sea. Speak with the walking stick. Develop friendship with all your neighbours, dogs, cats, cows, human beings, trees, flowers, etc. Then you will have a wide, perfect, rich, full life. You will realise oneness or the unity of life. This can hardly be described in words - you must feel it for yourself.

A strong mind has influence over a weak mind. Mind has influence over the physical body. Mind acts upon matter. Mind brings bondage. Mind gives freedom. Mind is the devil. Mind is your friend. Mind is your guru. You will have to tame the mind. You will have to discipline the mind. This is your important duty.

There is only one caste - the caste of humanity. There is only one religion - the religion of love, the religion of vedanta. There is only one dharma the dharma of truthfulness. There is only one law the law of cause and effect. There is only one God - the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent Lord. There is only one language - the language of the heart; the language of silence.

17 OCTOBER - KNOW THYSELF NOW

Man is a soul and has a body. Man's true nature is God. You are pure consciousness. Through ignorance you have imposed limitation upon yourself. Reflect and abide in the absolute or Brahman.

Man's innermost essence is atman or the divine spirit. Realising the spirit, man achieves security, certainty, perfection, freedom, independence, immortality and bliss eternal. Man and his life become the starting point and the end of philosophy. Man is of the nature of his faith. What his faith is, that verily is what he is.

Physical body and intellect depend on the soul within about which man knows little or nothing. Personality is the sum total of man. A man of good personality has a number of good qualities. He behaves quietly and politely. He has confidence in himself. He has the capacity to win other people's cooperation. He has the capacity to draw others towards himself. Hunger, libido and fame are the fundamental urges in man. Unless man is liberated from the bondage of the mind and matter he cannot have knowledge of the self and of God.

The head and the heart must be wedded - then alone there will be perfection and integration in man. Faith, virtue, piety, dispassion and honesty are the greatest treasures of man. Every man must arise, purify, meditate, and declare freedom unto himself. Man says, "When this (worldly activity) is over then I will have time to do that (meditate)". But it is never done because something new turns up all the time to distract him. The past cannot be changed. The future is yet in your power. Truth is not outside you, it is within you. It dwells in the cave of your heart.

You are a truth of God, a work of God, a will of God. You are unfettered, free - eternally free. Roar Om. Come out of the cage of flesh and roam about freely. When the cause of illusion is pulled away by the roots, when knowledge annihilates ignorance (without a possibility of a remnant or reminiscence) - then there is not an ego, a body or world to be experienced. When there is the cloud of ignorance you cannot see God but you cannot say that there is no God.

18 OCTOBER - LEARN FROM SLEEP

Study the condition of deep sleep, where there is neither the play of the mind nor the senses. There are no objects; there is neither attraction nor repulsion . Wherefrom do you derive ananda in sleep? This experience is universal; everyone says: "I slept soundly. I knew nothing. I was very happy in sleep." During deep sleep you rest in satchidananda atman and enjoy the atmic bliss which is independent of objects. The difference between deep sleep and samadhi (super-consciousness) is that in deep sleep there is the veil of ignorance and in samadhi this veil is removed.

From sleep you draw four conclusions: 1. You exist. There is a feeling of continuity of consciousness. 2. There is advaita (oneness). 3. You are ananda svarupa (bliss-itself). 4. The world is mithya (a play of the mind).

Names and forms are illusory. The world is mere play of the mind. When there is mind, there is world. If You can produce destruction of the mind consciously through yoga sadhana (practice), the world will disappear and you will feel the atman everywhere.

Even in the daytime you become one with the atman whenever a desire is gratified. When you enjoy an object you become mindless for a short time. You rest in your own atman and enjoy the atmic bliss. ignorant persons attribute this happiness to the objects. Just as the dog which sucks a dry bone foolishly imagines that the blood comes from the dry bone whereas in reality the blood oozes out of its own palate, so also foolish persons imagine that happiness comes from external objects, while they actually derive the happiness from their own Atman within. They are deluded owing to the force of illusion and ignorance.

Have no longing for objects. Reduce your wants. Cultivate vairagya (dispassion); it thins out the mind.

Do not mix much. Do not talk much. Do not walk much. Do not eat much. Do not sleep much. Control the emotions. Abandon desires and vasanas (tendencies). Control irritability and lust.

19 OCTOBER - THE ONENESS OF ALL EXISTENCE

Realise the totality and all-inclusiveness of your life. Your being is cosmic. You inhabit all the worlds - all the worlds are your spontaneous expression. One's love for friends, sons, etc. is not for the sake of others, but for one's own self. Therefore love for self is the highest and hence full of supreme happiness. The more you give up your hankerings for objects and try to realise your identity with the true self or Atman, the more you will realise your true happiness.

The path of evolution is from unconsciousness to life; from life to consciousness; from consciousness to self-consciousness; and from self-consciousness to superconsciousness. Mysticism is the art of union with the reality. A mystic is a person who has attained that union with the reality, or who is aiming for that attainment.

What is this ego; what is this little 'I'? Is it your foot or flesh or hand or blood - or any part of your body? Reflect well. You will know that there is no such thing as 'I'. The 'I' will vanish into nothingness. What is left is the pure, infinite atman. When the ego perishes, the supreme soul reveals itself in all its pristine glory and splendour.

Do not seek to satisfy the ego - offer all your life and actions as sacred sacrifice to the supreme divine. You yourself are passing a death sentence on yourself - you are creating a hell by your own evil thoughts. It is useless to look up to the skies to find the divine. Turn inwards. In your own heart dwells the eternal.

COSMIC POWER HOUSE

Individual souls are like electric light bulbs. The bulbs get their light from the power house. The jivas (souls) get their power from Brahman, the infinite cosmic power house. The bulb imagines that it is independent and boasts of its effulgence and power. It has no idea of its source. When the current fails it hangs its head in shame and weeps. Even so the jiva drags out his egoism. O fool, O dunce, know the source through purity, devotion, tapas, meditation and enjoy supreme peace and eternal bliss.

20 OCTOBER - ONE POINTED MIND

(Siva was very busy attending to the dispatch of free books. He suddenly stopped and looked up.)

From the time I got out of the morning class I have been going on thinking of writing a few poems, but I do not find time. I am doing this work but my mind is still working on the poems. Even when I was taking my milk, I was busy within sifting the points for the poems. Only when I finish the poems will my mind know rest.

Are you all keeping a note-book to record your thoughts? First of all you should note down in this book all the new points that you learn in the class. Then there are parallel ideas that might strike you; or ideas arising out of those expressed by others in the class. These may be new, novel and unknown to others. These should at once be noted down. Are you keeping such note-books?

Evil should not have time to dwell in your mind. What if someone refuses to give you milk, to give you food? What if someone scolds you? Always repeat: "I am not this body; I am not this mind; I am the eternal immortal satchidananda atman".

Bear insult and injury. If someone slaps you on your cheeks, you should not even mind it; you should not even be aware of it, so to say. This is very difficult. But this is most important. When the other man is scolding you, your mind should be engaged in vichara. After a while this man will realise: "What is this? I have been scolding him several times; he does not get irritated; he does not retort. There must be something in him, which I should learn." Then he will fall at your feet and apologise. You have conquered.

That which draws out this hidden consciousness of atman, is the highest knowledge. The teachings that break your bondage and bestow on you freedom, are the teachings of the ancient rishis (sages) which lay bare the mysteries of the universe. On the dawn of true knowledge the veil of ignorance is lifted and with it all illusory appearance of phenomena is sublated. What is left is only the perceiving self, the negator of all negations - which is no other than Brahman, existence, knowledge, bliss absolute.

21 OCTOBER - PERFECTION

The essential qualification for a sadhu (man of renunciation) is that he should adapt himself to all conditions and circumstances, causing no inconvenience to others. His is the duty to serve - not to worry others. Very few sadhus know what they are and what they should be.

This morning an old sadhu from Swarg Ashram came here. He was there when I was there, too. He is aged 80 now. Today they did not prepare roti here. There was only rice and curry. But, the sadhu would not take. He wanted only roti (bread). It seems rice will produce wind. If you allow him, he will lecture to you for half an hour on the evil effects of rice-eating. But he will refuse to be reminded that a very large population in India and the world lives on rice alone.

This is all that he has understood of sadhana (spiritual practice) during all these thirty years of sadhu life: "Rice should not be taken: roti alone is good for health and meditation." All their life these people will waste on this one thought of the right food and the wrong food. What is there if one day you do not get your food to your own liking. Even your own wife will not tolerate you for a day if you are so particular about what food you should have.

It is the special duty of a sadhu not to cause any inconvenience to householders. We are not to be a burden on householders, but to be of some service to them. When will the sadhu understand this.

Some sadhakas (seekers), here also have that impression that they are living in an asrama and that one consideration ought to be sufficient to open out the gates of Kaivalya (liberation) to them. I assure you: even if they live many hundreds of their lives near the greatest saint in the world, they will not improve even a bit. They must themselves exert. Each one must think for himself, act for himself. There have been some sadhakas here whom I myself trust and put in charge of the affairs of the asrama - then I myself used to dread to approach them. If, for instance, I go to them and ask them to prepare a little more of what they give me for my food in order that I may give the extra quantity to some one else, I would be refused. What I do on those occasions is to reduce my own consumption and distribute this to the others.

If a sadhaka gets real samadhi (superconsciousness) in a hundred births, that is a very great achievement. God is perfect; and unless and until all the evil qualities are eradicated and divine qualities acquired to the degree of perfection, there will be no samadhi.

22 OCTOBER - THE SADHANA THAT HARDENS

(A letter was on Siva's table: a great European yogi had written to Siva requesting him to invite him to India. This was needed to obtain a passport.)

What a big show of themselves do these so-called saints make. Flying from this country to that country: everywhere they go, parties, receptions and farewell parties, again. It is not?

Some of them should be received with a unique honour. Instead of flags and festoons adorning the reception entrance, people should hang old shoes and broomsticks.

We should not wait for the thing to happen actually. We should train ourselves. I have done so. I have beaten myself with shoes severely. This I used to do especially on birthdays - just after returning to my kutir after the meetings where people will praise me, glorify me, deify me, I will go into My kutir and beat myself nicely with a pair of shoes: "What are you? You wretched flesh-blood-excreta made body? Do you want garlands? Can you not wear torn clothes? Do you think that you are great? Do you want to be prostrated to? Now, take these garlands."

Sukha Deva was tested by Janaka like this. He was a great jnani. When he went to Janaka for instruction, he was made to wait outside the palace uncared for, without food, without shelter and without any honour. Then he was attended upon by the ladies of the court and the Maharanis. In these ways Janaka tested Suka Deva's tranquility of mind. Suka was above all these things. He had preserved his equanimity all through. Such should be a sadhaka.

I have heard this said of St. Francis of Assisi also. He used to call his body Mr. Ass. What a tremendous vairagya they all had.

Even this occasional shoe-beating is not enough for me. I should give this body a dose of this hardening-medicine at least once a week.

23 OCTOBER - WORDS OF WISDOM

One's individual ego, preconceived notions, pet ideas, prejudices and selfish interests should be given up. All these stands in the way of spiritual progress. Lord's grace begins to work only when you learn to discipline yourself, subordinate your selfishness and surrender fully to him.

Why dost thou try to find thy God in deities and temples when thou has kept thy visible gods standing outside, hungry and naked? Regarding Him as manifest everywhere thou shouldst serve all creatures with intense bhava if thou wishest to attain the highest perfection. Indeed, thy love towards the Lord should engender love for the whole universe - for thou must see Him in all.

Kindle the light of love in thy heart for love is the immediate way to the kingdom of God, the vast domain of perennial peace and joy. Where there is love there is peace. Where there is peace there is love. Life and death are the two scenes in the drama of life. All is passing; all is sorrow; all is pain; all is unreal.

This world is merely a play of colours and sounds. Hence, O man, seek the permanent, the all-blissful, the real, which is ever-shining in the chambers of thy heart, which is self-luminous, infinite, unchanging and eternal. Moksha (liberation) means nothing but the destruction of the impurities of the mind. The mind becomes pure when all desires and fears are annihilated. Lead the divine life. Light the lamp of divine life everywhere.

Thy aim should be to maintain an unshakable sweetness of disposition, to be pure and gentle and to be happy in all circumstances. To be always conscious of the divine, always to feel the divine presence, to live always in the awareness of the supreme being in the chambers of your heart and everywhere around you is verily to live a life of fullness and divine perfection, even whilst on earth.

This body is a lamp. The heart is the wick. The oil is your love for the Lord. You can build a temple in your heart by the absence of anger, by the practice of humility, compassion, forgiveness, faith, devotion, meditation, prayer and recitation of the Lord's name.

24 OCTOBER - MAYA

There is no duality in reality. All modification is illusory, Multiplicity is an illusion.

Maya (the illusory power of the Lord) projects multiplicity. Maya creates division - division between the individual soul and the supreme soul.

Maya is a tremendous, delusive power of God. Maya is the material stuff of this world. Maya is the source of the physical universe. This world of names and forms is a false show kept up by the jugglery of maya. Just as a stick burning at one end, when waved round quickly, produces an illusion of a circle of fire, so is it with the multiplicity of the world. Maya deludes us. Maya creates havoc in the mind. The things that we perceive all round us are only mind in form or substance. The world is a product of the mind. The whole World is an expansion of the mind. The entire universe arises and exists in the mind. Nothing of the world is outside the mind. Earth, mountains and rivers - all are fragments of the mind, appearing as it were, to exist outside. The world does not exist by itself. It is not seen without the aid of the mind. It disappears when the mind ceases to function, as in deep sleep.

It is imagination alone that assumes the forms of time, space and motion. Space and time have no independent status apart from Brahman or the self, which is pure awareness. There is no space without time, and there is no time without space. Space and time go together. Space and time are interdependent. They are both unreal. Time and space are mental projections, as unreal as dreams. However real they may seem to be, they are not ultimately real. Timeless, spaceless Brahman is the only reality.

Brahman alone is. It is Brahman alone that shines as the world of variegated objects, like water differentiated by the waves into many kinds of foam, bubbles, etc. Brahman appears as the world when cognised through the mind and the senses.

Maya conceals the truth and presents an error - it veils the reality and shows the world. Mistaking the body for atman or the self is called maya. Maya screens the knowledge of atman and therefore man mistakes one for the other. This is the cause of bondage - we have the erroneous consciousness that we are objective beings, that our actions are objective expressions projected in time and space.

25 OCTOBER - WORLD IS THE BODY OF GOD

The universe is a mirror in which is reflected the being and beauty of God. God's universe is ruled by his eternal laws. In the East, the law of cause and effect is called the law of karma. In the New Testament it is expressed in the words: "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." What is written is written and no man can change the eternal plan. That which is decreed by God's will occurs on this earth. There is system, method, order, regularity everywhere in this universe because the universe is, ultimately governed by God.

This world is the body of the Lord. This world, though it really is not, appears to be. Know that it is nothing but a reflection. When you know the rope, the snake-knowledge disappears. Even so the world does not really exist and yet appears to be existing through ignorance. It disappears with the knowledge of the atman on which the illusion of the world is superimposed. In Brahman or the absolute, this world shines falsely, owing to ignorance. It is not true, even as dreams under the influence of sleep. It is because of illusory superimposition on the part of the individual that the empirical names and forms appear to be real. When, by the power of meditation, the effect (world) is negated as unreal, the cause (Brahman) also ceases to be a cause. The certitude or conviction that the universe is not the supreme Brahman is itself avidya (ignorance). Hence the certitude that, "The universe is Brahman alone", is emancipation.

The world is a spirit manifested in space and time. When you look at the absolute, through the senses, it appears as the universe. The puryastaka (body) is composed of the eight - that is mind, egoism, intellect and the five objects of the senses (sound, sight etc.). All these, composed of the five elements, are appearances only. So also is time through right discrimination. In this mortal world, everything perishes, but the ideas and the ideals do not perish. Ideas are more enduring than objects, which are perishable, but atman, the immortal soul endures forever. Just as the universe appears dark to the blind, and shining to those who have eyes to see, so it appears blissful to the sages and painful to the ignorant.

26 OCTOBER - IGNORANCE

The mind is a creation of avidya! (ignorance) and it is the effect of avidya. The mind is filled with delusion - this is why it tempts you and makes you go astray. If you can destroy the cause of the mind by getting knowledge of the supreme self, the mind is nowhere; it dwindles into an airy nothing.

The whole experience of duality, made up of perceiver and perceived, is pure imagination. There is no ignorance apart from the mind. On the destruction of the mind, all is destroyed. The mind's activity is the cause of all appearance. On account of illusion you think that the outside objects are separate from you and real.

As long as there is mind there are all these distinctions - big and small, high and low, superior and inferior, good and bad, etc., - but the highest truth is that there is no relativity. If you can transcend the mind by constant and profound meditation on atman you will be able to attain a state beyond the pairs of opposites wherein lies supreme peace and highest knowledge.

The first thought is the 'I-thought'. As this 'I-thought' is the base of all other thoughts, egoism is the seed for the mind. The idea of 'I' brings in its train the idea of time, space and other potencies. With these environments, the name 'jiva' (soul) accrues to it. And contemporaneously with it there arise buddhi (intellect), memory and manas (mind) which is the seed of the tree of desire.

You cannot realise God if you have the slightest trace of egoism, or attachment to name and form, or the least tinge of worldly desire in the mind. Try to minimise egoism little by little. Root it out by self-sacrifice, by karma yoga, by self-surrender, or by vedantic self-enquiry. Whenever egoism asserts itself, raise the question within yourself: "What is the source of this little 'I"? Again and again ask this question and, as you remove layer after layer, the onion dwindles to nothing. Analyse the little 'I' and it becomes a non-entity.

The ego is the Lord for whose entertainment the dance is performed and the objects of the senses are his companions. The intellect is the dancing girl and the senses are the persons who play on the instruments which accompany the dance. The sakshi (witnessing soul) is the lamp which illumines the scene. Just as the lamp, without moving from its place, furnishes light to all parts - so too, the sakshi from its unchangeable position illumines everything situated inside or outside.

27 OCTOBER - BODY IS NOT I

This is a world of diversity. Intellects are different; faces are different; sounds are different; religions are different; faiths are different. Colours are different; faculties are different tastes and temperaments are different. But one thing is common to all - every one of us wants nitya sukha (eternal happiness), infinite knowledge, immortality, independence and freedom. These things can be attained by knowledge of the self alone.

Everybody wants happiness that is not mixed with sorrow and pain but he does not know where he can get this supreme bliss. The best means to acquire this knowledge is by the enquiry, "Who am I?" This has the potentiality of producing the quiescence of mind which will enable it to wade through this ocean of samsara (cycle of birth and death). It demands a sharp, subtle, pure intellect, bold understanding and gigantic will. The commonplace 'I' that everyone is glibly talking about and relishing acutely every moment of his life, from the babbling baby to the garrulous old man, must be clearly understood.

The physical body is not the 'I', it is the product of food - it lives on food and dies without food. It is a bundle of skin, flesh, fat, bones, marrow, blood and a lot of other filthy things. It does not exist before birth or after death. It lasts for a short intervening period. It is transient. It undergoes changes such as childhood, youth and old age. It has six changes - existence, birth, growth, modification, decay and death. It is not of one homogeneous essence; it is manifold, insentient, inert. It is an object of perception like a chair or a table. You continue to live even when hands and legs have gone.

How can the body be the self-existent, eternally pure atman, the knower, the silent witness of the changes that take place in the body and in all things, the inner ruler of all ?

You have learned that body and mind are not 'I'.

You have learned that prana is not 'I'.

The world is unreal, this thou hast understood.

Thou hast understood that Brahman alone is real.

Now meditate on the formula - 'I am Brahman'.

Lose thyself, unite with him.

Rest there peacefully, joyfully.

This is the proper place, the abode of the pure.

28 OCTOBER - AM I THE I?

You say, "This is my body" - this indicates that you are different from the body and the body is your instrument. You are holding it just as you hold a walking stick in your hand.

In sleep you exist independent of the walking stick in your hand (body). In dreams you operate through the astral body without having any concern for the fleshy body. Through ignorance you have identified yourself with the physical body and mistaken it for the real 'I' which is ever-pure, all-pervading, self-existent, self-luminous and self-contained, which has neither beginning nor end, which is changeless, beyond time, space and causation, and which exists in the past the present and the future.

Prana (vital force) is not 'I'. It is the effect of rajas (energy). It is inert. It cannot welcome a man while you are asleep, though it is flowing. It increases and decreases. You say, "My prana" - this shows you are different from prana. It is your instrument only. You can control the breath by pranayama. The controller is different from the controlled (prana). Prana is not 'I'.

Mind also is not 'I'. It gropes in darkness. It borrows light from a higher power. It gets puzzled and confused. During shock and fear it becomes insentient. It is the effect of satva. It is your instrument. You say, "my mind" - therefore mind is different from 'I'. It is full of changing ideas. It has a beginning and an end. You can control the mind and the thoughts - the controller is different from the controlled (mind). It is as much your property, and outside of you, as your limbs etc., or dress, chair, etc. In sleep there is no mind yet you wake up with a feeling of continuity of consciousness. There is no mind in delirium or coma yet 'I' remains. Mind is a bundle of thoughts and all thoughts are centred around the false egoistic little 'I'. The root thought of all these thoughts is the 'I' that is full of vanities.

Talking of myself, I always speak of 'I'. The sheaths in which I am happy, old, black, a sanyasi (monk), etc., are incidents in the continuity of the 'I'. They are ever changing and varying but the 'I' remains the same - unchanging amid the changing.

29 OCTOBER - BRAHMAN AND MAYA

Like the pot and clay, waves and the sea, ornaments of gold and gold, the universe is non-different from Brahman. The cause does not lose its being by appearing as the effect. The world is not an illusion, but it is non-different from Brahman. Like heat is inseparable from fire and identical with it, so the universe which is of the nature of Brahman is identical with it. The world is dependent on Brahman and independently the world is nothing. The play of chit (consciousness) alone shines as this universe. The universe was, is and always will be. There is no beginning or end to creation.

Behind the impermanent material world there is the invisible source of all things, pure, unchanging spirit or atman. In the presence of God, maya (illusion) creates the world, even as in the presence of the superior officer, the subordinates do their work. Just as a carpenter cannot work without the instruments, and the instruments themselves, also cannot do any work without the carpenter, so also, Ishvara (God) cannot create the world without maya, nor can maya create the world without Ishvara.

This world is an overflow of the love of God. This is the view of a bhakta (devotee). This world is an overflow of the bliss of Brahman. This is the view of a vedantin or sage. Love and bliss are one; God and Brahman are one. This world is nothing but the expression of God's love for Himself. This world is an expression or manifestation of God. It is the outcome of the spontaneous play of love and joy. God expands Himself and manifests as the world.

Atmic sankalpa (the will of the self) makes this universe shine and constitutes it. Every object is surcharged with divine significance. Everything in this world has got a spiritual message to convey. Learn from everything. All is Brahman. When this truth is intellectually recognised and intuitively realised, then all feelings of differences end forever.

30 OCTOBER - BRAHMAN

Whatever has a beginning or an end is unreal. That which exists in the past, the present and the future is real. Only Brahman exists in these three periods of time. Hence Brahman alone is real. The reality underlying all names and forms, the primal one from which everything originates is Brahman, the absolute. Brahman is the soul of all joy, all bliss. Brahman transcends phenomena. Production and destruction are only phenomena, the jugglery of the mind or maya (illusion).

Brahman is infinite, eternal, immortal. Infinity is one - only that which is unchanging, indivisible, non-dual, beginningless, endless, timeless, spaceless, causeless, can be infinite. There can be no parts, no differences, no distinctions in Brahman.

Brahman is self-luminous, self-existent, self-contained, self-established, self-revealed. Brahman illumines itself by itself; by its nature it is ever illumined. Individual souls and the world are unreal - nothing save Brahman is eternal.

Immortality, knowledge, bliss purity, independence, perfection, etc., constitute the very nature of Brahman. He resides in your heart. He witnesses the activity of the buddhi (intellect). Word, speech, mouth, may not approach Brahman. Mind also cannot go there. Supreme Brahman is impersonal, formless, all-pervading and subtle - but he can be reached through meditation, through the eye of intuition, by one who has purified himself and who is endowed with the four means of salvation.

God cannot be seen with the physical eyes - but he reveals himself to His devotees. He is one though called by countless names. Realise the reality of the one existence, the one life that throbs in all atoms, in all beings - the one power that creates, sustains and dissolves this universe.

When the heart of the devotee is united in the Lord, no difference between them remains.

Before saturating the mind with thoughts of Brahman you will have to assimilate divine ideas first.

Remember this triplet always: Assimilation - Saturation - Realisation.

31 OCTOBER - ATMAN

The atman (self) is most ancient, hard to perceive and abides secretly in the innermost cave of the heart or intellect. This atman or supreme soul fills all with his radiance. This atman is incorporeal, pure, invulnerable. He is untouched by evil. The atman is the supreme seer and thinker, immanent and transcendental. This atman is the immortal spirit, the common, unifying entity present in all. You live, because the supreme atman is. You understand, because the atman is intelligence. You enjoy, because the atman is bliss.

Atman is the reality itself - it is of the nature of pure consciousness. It is undifferentiated, pure awareness and pure experience. Atman is secondless; it alone is; all else which appears to be is not.

Atman is the one which appears divided; the changeless as full of change; the timeless as temporal; the infinite as extended and fragmented in space. Atman is one. It is the root, the reality itself. Atman is pure consciousness, calm and infinite like the waveless ocean. That atman which is impersonal, changeless, like unto space, by nature purity itself - verily, verily, that am I. The one who is the eternal, the atman, exists. He is all in all. This atman is so mysterious that it cannot easily be grasped. This atman can easily be grasped when the science of the self (brahmavidya) is taught by a guru who has attained self-realisation.

This atman is subtler than the subtlest and so is not attained by arguments. Like butter hidden in milk, this mysterious atman is hidden in every being. Realise this atman by the churning of meditation. The atman is unborn, ageless, immortal, deathless and fearless. He who knows this atman becomes Brahman, the fearless.

Atman is Brahman - absolute, infinite, the supreme being. It is existence absolute, knowledge absolute, bliss absolute. It is self-delight and self-knowledge. It is bodiless, formless and without gunas, all-pervading, all-full, imperishable. It has neither beginning nor end. It exists in past, present and future. It is self-existent, the source for body, mind, senses, prana, the vedas and the universe itself. No one can deny it; it is the inner self of all beings.

1 NOVEMBER - SELF-REALISATION

There is no other duty for man except meditation on the self. Dismissing all else, one should establish oneself in the self. There remains nothing to be done or attained when the self is experienced. For that Brahman the immortal is before, behind, to the right and to the left and stretched forth above and below.

Brahman is all this. The real alone is an enduring being and this real is experienced through meditation coupled with knowledge. Whatever a man of purified mind makes clear in his mind, and whatever desires he desires, that he gets and that he fulfills. One should therefore have pure and perfect resolves.

The supreme self is experienced in the fourth state of consciousness. It is neither this nor that - it has no quality in particular and yet it is everything. It is peaceful, blessed and non-dual. It is the cessation of all phenomena. It is the atman that should be known and realised. That is the purpose of life. The liberated sage experiences that he is everything - the tree, the mountain, the sun. He is the food and the eater of the food. He is the knower, the knowledge and the known, in one. He is the whole universe in himself.

Bliss is the ultimate nature of reality - from bliss all this comes forth. All the bliss of the world is only a shadow of self-bliss. The self is the source of all bliss - it is everything - all knowledge and all bliss. All this is based on consciousness and is guided by consciousness. Consciousness is Brahman. I am Brahman. That thou art. This self is Brahman. Only the infinite is bliss. There one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else. That is the infinite fullness.

The self is an ocean without a shore and a surface. It is merely existence, consciousness and bliss. When there is duality one can speak to the other, but when everything is but one's own self then who can speak to whom? Who can see whom?

Atman is pure consciousness - it is the unchanging witness. It is realized within your heart as existence, knowledge, bliss absolute. Realise this atman within the temple of your own heart and enjoy immortal bliss.

2 NOVEMBER - SATCHIDANANDA

Brahman is satchidananda. Sat is truth - that which exists in the past, the present and the future - which has no beginning, middle or end - which is self-existent, self-created - which never changes. In truth the world abides, from the truth the world comes forth and in truth the world dissolves. Truth is the only substance that underlies and pervades this world of beings. Truth is, and gives immortality and fearlessness.

Chit is self-knowledge. There are no indriyas (senses) in cit. It is self-luminous and imparts light to the mind, intellect, senses and the skin of the body, the sun, moon, stars, fire, lightning and all objects.

Ananda is bliss itself. There is no enjoyer in ananda. It is enjoyment itself.

When you are in the company of women, say: "There is satchidananda atman in all these names and forms. Names and forms are false. They have no independent existence. Their support is the one satchidananda atman." Lust will vanish; sex ideas will disappear. Practise, feel and realise this truth. One grain of practice is better than a ton of theory. Practice is better than precept.

The snake in the rope vanishes when you bring a lamp. So also the illusion of the body and the world disappears with the advent of the sun of wisdom. All fears, miseries, and troubles melt away. You have regained your original pristine glory.

Pure consciousness is Brahman or the absolute - it is always the witnessing subject. It can never become the object of perception - it is always the knower. Mind can only know the external objects. How can mind, effect, know the cause, Brahman? How can the finite know the infinite? How can mind know the knower? You cannot jump on your shoulders. Fire cannot burn itself. If atman becomes the object of perception, it will become a finite object. The denier of the pure consciousness does always exist (sat) - he is just like the man who denies or doubts his tongue when he is talking. This proves Brahman always exists. Existence is pure consciousness (chit). Pure consciousness is also immortal bliss (ananda)

3 NOVEMBER - TIME IS A TRICK

Time is the mode of the mind. It is a mental creation. Time is a trick of the mind. It is an illusion. Brahman is beyond time. It is eternity. Go beyond time and rest in the timeless, eternal, imperishable Brahman.

'Up and down', 'within and without', 'high and low', 'big and small', 'thin and stout', 'virtue and vice', 'good and bad', 'pleasure and pain', 'here and there', are all relative terms. They are mental creations only. Up will become down and down will become up. This stick is small when compared to that big stick, but that big stick will become small when compared with an even bigger stick! Within will become without and without will become within.

What is good at one time is bad at another time. What is good for one man is bad for another man. What is dharma for one is adharma for another and, what is dharma at one time is not dharma at another time.

Brahman is neither thin nor stout, neither big nor small. In Brahman there is neither within nor without, neither virtue nor vice, neither pleasure nor pain, good nor bad. It is a homogeneous essence of bliss and knowledge where there is no play of the mind, neither time nor space, east nor west, past nor future, Thursday nor Friday.

Tomorrow becomes today and today becomes yesterday. Future becomes present and present becomes the past. What is all this? This is a creation or trick of the mind only. In God, everything is in the present only; it is here only.

There is neither night nor day, yesterday nor tomorrow in the sun. It is the mind that has created time and space. When you are happy time passes quickly. When you are unhappy time hangs heavily. All this is only a relative world.

Life is not a question of creeds but of deeds well done. No life is free from difficulties - it is a series of conflicts. Face them boldly through the grace of the Lord and the power of his name. Change is the law of life. Truth is the law of life. Love is the fulfilling of the law of life. Death is the gate to another life. Life is endless.

4 NOVEMBER - VIVEKA

Viveka is discrimination between the real and the unreal, permanent and impermanent, self and the not-self. Viveka dawns in a man on account of the grace of God. The grace can come only when one has done incessant selfless service in countless births with the feeling of Ishvararpana (offering unto God). The door of the higher mind is flung open when there is awakening of discrimination. There is an unchanging permanent principle amidst the ever-changing phenomena of the universe and the fleeting movements and oscillation of mind.

The five sheaths are floating in the universal consciousness like straw on water. The five changing koshas (sheaths) are mixed up with the eternal atman (self). There is childhood, boyhood, adolescence and old age for this physical body. But there is an unchanging background for this ever-changing body and mind, like the blackboard or screen in a cinema which manifests various forms and figures. The witness or the silent spectator of these changes of the body and mind is permanent and unchanging. He is like the all-pervading space. He pervades, permeates and interpenetrates all these changing forms like the thread in a garland of flowers. This eternal essence of atman is present everywhere and in everything - atoms, electrons, mustard, nay in ants and mountains. He dwells in the chambers of your own heart. He is the soul of this tree, stone, flower, goat, dog, cat, man, saint or Devata (God). He is the common property of all, be he a saint or a sinner, a king or a peasant, a beggar or a baron, a scavenger or a cobbler. He is the very source for life and thought.

The aspirant should learn to discriminate between the eternal and unchanging substratum of all objects and the ever-changing names and forms. He should seriously engage himself at all times to separate the eternal unchanging self. He should try to separate himself from the changing, impermanent five sheaths, from the passions, emotions, feelings, thoughts, sentiments, nay from the oscillating mind itself. He should distinguish between the mind and the witness who moves and illumines the mind, between ordinary sensation, feelings and sentiments and perfect awareness of pure consciousness which remains unaffected and unattached, between personality and individuality. He must also separate himself from the adventitious false superimpositions of the body, viz., position, rank, avocation, birth, caste, stage, and order of life. These are all accidental appendages of the false personality.

5 NOVEMBER - MEDITATE ON THESE FOR WISDOM

The aspirant should separate himself also from the sad-urmis (six waves in the ocean of samsara (worldly life), viz., birth and death, hunger and thirst, exhilaration and grief). Birth and death, belong to the physical body; hunger and thirst belong to the prana (life); exhilaration and grief are the attributes of the mind. The soul is unattached. The six waves cannot touch the atman (self) which is subtle like the all-pervading ether. He should also separate himself from the indriyas (senses). He should not take upon himself the functions of the indriyas. He should stand as a spectator and witness of the activities of the mind, prana and the indriyas. The indriyas and the mind are like iron pieces in contact with a magnet. They function by borrowing the light and power from the source the eternal Atman.

Meditation on the following slokas (verses) of and on the special formulae of Sri Sankara will pave a way in the development of your viveka (wisdom) and in separating yourself from the illusory vehicles, viz. indriyas prana, mind and the five sheaths.

The formulae of Sri Sankaracharya are, "Brahman (the eternal) alone is truth - this world is unreal; the jiva (soul) is identical with Brahman". The Gita says, "The unreal hath no being; the real never ceaseth to be; the truth about both hath been perceived by the seers of the essence of things". (Chapter II - Verse 16). Reflection on this sloka will infuse viveka.

I do not do anything - so should the harmonised one think, who knoweth the essence of things. Seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, speaking, giving, grasping, opening and closing the eyes, he knows that the senses move among the objects of the senses." (Chapter V - Verses 8,9). You can separate yourself from the indriyas by meditating upon the meaning of these shlokas.

All actions are wrought by the qualities of nature only. The self, deluded by egoism, thinketh, 'I am the doer. But he, who knoweth the essence of the divisions of the qualities and functions holding that 'the qualities' move amid the qualities, is not attached. "By meditating upon these two shlokas you can separate yourself from the three gunas (qualities of nature). "He who seeth that prakriti (nature) verily performeth all actions and that the self is actionless, he seeth." (Chapter XIII - Verse 2).

6 NOVEMBER - BE FIRM IN WISDOM

Viveka (wisdom) gives inner strength and mental peace. A viveki (wise one) gets no troubles. He is always on the alert. He never gets entangled in anything. He has far-sightedness. He knows the true value of the objects of this universe. He is fully aware of the worthlessness of these shallow toys. Nothing, nothing can tempt him. Maya (illusion) cannot approach him now.

Associations with mahatmas (holy ones) and study of vedantic literature will infuse viveka in man. Viveka should be developed to the maximum degree; one should be well established in it; viveka should not be an ephemeral or occasional mood in an aspirant. It should not fail him when he is in trouble, when any difficulty stares him in the face. It must indeed become part and parcel of his nature. He should exercise it at all times without any effort. If one is careless in the beginning, viveka may come and go. So the aspirant should live in the company of sages for a long time till viveka burns in him like a big steady flame.

Maya is very powerful. She tries her extreme level best to lead the aspirant astray. She throws many temptations and obstacles on the path of young inexperienced aspirants. Therefore the company of sages and mahatmas is like an impenetrable fortress for the neophyte. Now no temptations can assail him. He will undoubtedly develop true and lasting viveka. He will then have permanent and spontaneous viveka.

Then only he is truly and perfectly safe. The dangerous zone is past. Only a true viveki can claim to be the richest, happiest and most powerful man in the world. He is a rare spiritual gem. He is a beacon-light and torchbearer. If viveka is developed all other qualifications will come by themselves. From viveka is born vairagya (dispassion).

Discrimination is the faculty which distinguishes between the real and the unreal. The whole world outside and the universe that is inside, are unreal. Earth, water, wind, fire, the sky, the ocean, our bodies and the vital force animating them, our minds, our consciousness of ourselves - all are but airy nothingness. The only real thing is the atman (self) or Brahman, the absolute.

7 NOVEMBER - VAIRAGYA

There is a way to the immortal abode and supreme happiness. There is a way to the fourth dimension. That way is vairagya. Follow the way. Vairagya is dispassion, desirelessness or non-attachment. It is indifference to sensual objects herein and hereafter. It is born of and sustained by, right discrimination.

Vairagya is the opposite of attachment which binds a man to the wheel of births and deaths; vairagya liberates a man from bondage. Vairagya purifies the sensual mind and turns it inward. It is the most important qualification for a spiritual aspirant. Without it, no spiritual life is possible.

The two currents of the mind - attraction and repulsion - really constitute the world of births and deaths. A worldly man is a slave of these two mighty currents and is tossed about hither and thither like a piece of straw. He smiles when experiencing pleasure; he weeps when in pain. He clings to pleasant objects and runs away from those which cause pain.

Wherever there is sensation of pleasure, the mind gets glued, as it were, to the object that gives pleasure. This is what is called attachment and brings only bondage and pain. When the object is withdrawn, or when it perishes, the mind suffers unspeakable pain. Attraction is the root-cause for human suffering.

A dispassionate man has a different training and has different experience altogether. He is a pastmaster in the art or science of separating himself from the impermanent, perishable objects. He has absolutely no attraction for them and constantly dwells in the eternal. He stands adamantine as a peak amidst a turbulent storm, as a spectator of this wonderful world-show. A dispassionate man has no attraction for pleasant objects and no repulsion for painful ones. Nor is he afraid of pain. He knows well that pain helps considerably in his progress and evolution, in his journey towards the goal. He is convinced that pain is the best teacher.

8 NOVEMBER - REAL DISPASSION

The world is as unreal as a shadow, bubble or froth. Why do you run after the toys of name and fame? How uncertain is sensual life in this illusory world! How transitory is sensual pleasure! Mark how many thousands of people were carried away in the recent earthquake! How many houses were destroyed! Yet people want to build seaside cottages and attain immortality there. How foolish they are! Self-deluded souls! Pitiable is their lot! I pray for them. They are earthworms only, as they revel in filth. May God bestow on them vairagya (dispassion), viveka (wisdom) and bhakti (devotion).

The vairagya that comes momentarily after such incidents as the loss of some dearly beloved relative, or wealth, is known as karana vairagya. It will not help much in one's spiritual progress. The mind will be simply waiting to catch hold of the sensual objects when an opportunity comes.

Vairagya, born of discrimination is the premonitory symptom of spiritual development. It will help the aspirant in his spiritual upliftment. If you develop vairagya, if you subdue your indriyas and shun the enjoyments and pleasures of this world - as dung, as poison, as they are mixed with pain, sin, fear, craving, miseries, disease, old age and death - nothing can tempt you in this world. You will have eternal peace and infinite bliss. You will have no attraction for women and other earthly objects. Lust cannot take hold of you.

The body is the source of great miseries. It is full of impurities. It brings disrespect, censure, etc. It is subject to diseases, decay and old age. It passes away without a moment's notice.

Give up moha (attachment) for the body. Think of the Atman (self) which is eternal, pure and all-pervading. The things that used to afford you delight before, give you displeasure now. That is the sign of vairagya. The shadow of clouds, the friendship with a fool, the beauty of youth, wealth - all last only for a short time. Vairagya (dispassion, indifference, non-attachment) is of two kinds. Karana vairagya on account of some miseries and viveka purvak vairagya on account of discrimination between real and unreal. The mind of the former type of man is simply waiting for the opportunity to get back the things that were given up. But the other man who gave up the objects on account of viveka will have spiritual advancement. He will not have a downfall.

9 NOVEMBER - ABANDON BODY-CONSCIOUSNESS

The physical body appears only in the present. A thing which has neither past nor future must be considered as non-existent in the present also. If you think over deeply, with pure intelligence you will find atyanta abhava (complete non-existence) for the world.

This body which is full of impurities, urine, pus and faecal matter etc., is perishable. It is like froth or bubble or mirage. It is despised by its enemies. It remains like a useless log of wood on the ground when prana (life) leaves it. It is the cause of pain and suffering. It is your enemy. You should treat this body with contempt, as dung. Why should you cling to it and worship it with scents, powders and flowers? Do not be silly and foolish in adorning it with fine silks and ornaments. It is dire ignorance only.

"Nothing on this earth belongs to me; this body is not mine" - this is wisdom. "He is my son; she is my daughter; she is my wife; that bungalow is mine; that garden is mine; I am a brahmana; I am lean; I am fat" - this is foolishness of a superior order. This physical body is the property of fishes, jackals and vultures. How can you call this yours?

Application of soap to the body, oil to the hair, powder to the face, looking in the mirror very often, wearing rings on the fingers - all these will intensify moha (attachment) for the body. Therefore give up these things ruthlessly.

Will your son or daughter or friend or relative help you when you are about to die? Have you got one sincere, unselfish friend in this world? All are selfish. There is no pure love. But that Lord, your real friend of friends, father of fathers, who dwells in your heart, will never forsake you though you forsake him. Adore in silence that God of gods, Divinity of divinities, Highest of the highest. May he bless us with his love, wisdom, power and peace. Om!

Narayana Upanishad says: "In the beginning these two roads were laid, the roads through karma (action) and sanyasa (renunciation). The latter consists in the renunciation of three-fold desire - of son, wealth and fame. Of these the road through sanyasa is preferable. "The Taittiriya Upanishad also says: "Renunciation, tyaga, is certainly to be preferred."

10 NOVEMBER - WHERE IS REAL LOVE

The desire to attain knowledge of the self will dawn only in the person who is free from desires, who has a pure mind, and who is quite disgusted with this worldly life. Such a man only is competent to hear, meditate and attain Brahman, jnana or knowledge of Brahman. When the knowledge of the self dawns, ignorance, which is the seed for bondage and the cause of karma is totally eradicated and the aspirant attains immortality and eternal bliss.

Do not depend upon anybody. Rely on your own self. Be centred in the atman only. The sweet wife deserts her husband when he is on the roll of unemployment and marries another young man. The rich husband divorces his wife when she loses her beauty on account of Protracted illness and marries another woman. Even Lord Jesus and Buddha were forsaken by all their friends, followers and disciples. This is a strange world. Mysterious is maya (illusion)!

Real affection can be found in God and sages only. Worldly affection is only showy, hypocritical, illusory and changing. Just see whether your relatives, even your friends, your brothers and sisters show affection to you when you are unemployed, when you are suffering from a chronic, incurable disease and are without any money in your hands.

Saints and prophets who have realised God are shouting at the tops of their voices that the Lord is dwelling in the hearts of beings, and yet no one is earnestly attemp-ting to make a vigorous search in his own heart. Is this not lamentable? God is above below, within, without and all around. Thirst for his darshan (vision). Look within, practise introvision. Try earnestly to attain the immortal being. In Him, you can find eternal peace. Enter His kingdom right now in this very second. Stand firm on the rock of truth or Brahman. Have a firm grip of your reality, the self-luminous, immortal atman or soul. Look upon this universe as your all-full form. Only when knowledge of the self dawns in your heart can you free yourself from rebirth and become identical with the supreme self. Equip yourself with the four means. Hear the srutis (scriptures), reflect, meditate and realise. May you become a sage!

11 NOVEMBER - FREEDOM FROM ATTACHMENT

Attachment produces infatuation and causes entanglement. Fear exists on account of attachment and desire. Infatuation or delusion is a stigma on pure love. Attachment to the objects of the world is due to ignorance of their true nature. Nothing but the atman (self) really exists. Objects are illusion. Attachment is indicative of the feeling that the objective possession brings happiness. This idea has to be removed from the mind.

Happiness is not in the objects but in one's own atman. Attachment is the impure vasana (feeling) of love or hate that is entertained by the mind for the diverse objects of this world. If you remain unaffected by joy, envy and sorrow, you have relinquished all attachments. If, without rejoicing in joy, or pining under pain, you do not subject yourself to the trammels of desire, then you can be said to have rid yourself of attachment.

If you can be content with whatever you get, then you have cast off attachment. Through attachment, desire for material objects arises. Renunciation of attachment is said to be moksha (release). Through its destruction all rebirth ceases. Destroy the association of the mind with the objects and attain the state of the jivanmukta (liberated soul).

Pleasure does not lie in the objects but in the condition of the mind. The mind goes out in search of pleasure. At the same time there is pain as the mind is straying away from the truth. When the object is attained, the mind ceases to function and rests on the atman, the substratum. Then it unconsciously tastes the bliss of the Atman.

Sublimate your inward longings through discrimination, dispassion, enquiry and meditation. You will attain supreme bliss. Develop vairagya (dispassion). Sharpen the intellect. Give up kutarka and viparita bhavana (distorted and perverted thinking). Identify yourself with the pure atman. You will soon attain knowledge of the self.

If you are careless and non-vigilant, if you are irregular in meditation, if your dispassion wanes, if you yield even a bit to sense pleasures, the mind will continue to go downward. Maya (illusion) closes in even upon a wise man if he stops his sadhana (practice) and meditation even for a short time.

Be careful. Be alert. Be regular in your meditation.

12 NOVEMBER - TRUE DISPASSION

Vairagya (dispassion) does not mean abandoning social duties and the responsibilities of life. It does not mean detachment from the world, or a life in a solitary cave of the Himalayas or in the cremation ground. It does not mean living on neem leaves, the wearing of matted hair and carrying a water-pot made of gourd or coconut shell in the hand. It does not mean shaving of the head and discarding one's clothes. Vairagya is mental detachment from all connections of the world.

A man may remain in the world and discharge all the duties of his order and stage of life with detachment. He may be a householder. He may live with family and children. But at the same time, he may have perfect mental detachment from everything. He can perform his spiritual practice systematically. That man who has perfect mental detachment while remaining in the world is a hero, indeed. He is much better than a holy man who is living in a cave of the Himalayas, because the former has to face innumerable temptations at every moment of his life.

Wherever a man may go, he carries with him his fickle, restless mind, his desires and subconscious impressions. Even if he lives in solitude in the Himalayas, still he is the same worldly man if he is engaged in building castles in the air and in thinking of the objects of the world. In that case even the cave becomes a big city for him. If the mind remains quiet, if it is free from attachments, one can be perfectly dispassionate even while living in a mansion in the busiest part of a city like Calcutta. Such a mansion will be converted into a dense forest by him. Vairagya is purely a mental state.

Vairagya is a means for attaining wisdom of the self. It is not the goal itself. A realised sage has neither desire nor dispassion. If you give him a little dry bread, he is quite satisfied and will not grumble. If you give him the best sweetmeats, milk and fruits, he will not refuse, but he will not be elated by good food. He has equanimity of mind and is above likes and dislikes. He always delights in his own self only, but not in external objects.

13 NOVEMBER - CONQUER THE WORLD WITHIN

He who has controlled his mind is really happy and free. Physical freedom is no freedom at all. If you are easily carried away by surging emotions and impulses, if you are under the grip of moods and cravings, how can you be really happy, O sweet beloved child? You are like a rudderless boat. You are tossed about hither and thither like a piece of straw in the vast expanse of ocean. You laugh for five minutes and weep for five hours. What can wife, son, friends, money, fame and power do for you when you are under the sway of the impulse of your mind?

He is a true hero who has controlled his mind. There is an adage: "He who has controlled his mind has controlled the world." True victory is victory over the mind. That is real freedom. A thorough rigorous discipline and self-imposed restrictions will eventually eradicate all desires, thoughts, impulses, cravings and passions. Only then and not until then can you expect to be free from the thraldom of the mind.

You should not give any leniency to the mind. The mind is a mischievous imp. Curb it by drastic measures. Become a perfect yogi . Money cannot give you freedom. Freedom is not a commodity that can be purchased. It is a rare, hidden treasure guarded by a five-hooded serpent. Unless you kill or tame this serpent, you cannot have access to this treasure. That treasure is spiritual wealth; that is freedom; that is bliss. The serpent is your mind. The five hoods are the five senses through which the mind serpent hisses.

The rajasic (restless) mind always wants new things. It wants variety. It gets disgusted with monotony. It wants change of place, change of food, change, in short, of everything. But you should train the mind to stick to one thing. You should not complain of monotony. You should have patience, adamantine will and undaunted persistence. Then only can you succeed in yoga. He who wants something new every now and then is quite unfit for yoga. You should stick to one place, one spiritual preceptor, one method of yoga and one institution. That is the way to positive success.

14 NOVEMBER - UPHILL TASK

True freedom results from the disenthralment of the mind. He is a real potentate and ruler who has conquered the mind. He who has conquered desires, passions and the mind is the richest man. If the mind is under control, it matters little whether you stay in a palace, or a cave in the Himalayas; whether you engage yourself in worldly activity or sit in silence. The mind can be controlled by untiring perseverance and great patience, equal to that of one engaged in emptying the ocean, drop by drop, with the tip of a blade of grass. To tame a lion or a tiger is far more easy than taming one's own mind. Tame your own mind first. Then you can tame the minds of others quite easily.

Constantly think of God. You can very easily control the mind. Constant thinking of God thins out the mind. The mind can very easily think of worldly objects. It is its nature. The mental force can easily flow in the old grooves and avenues of mundane thoughts. It finds it extremely hard to think of God and dwell on lofty thoughts.

The difficulty in weaning the mind from objects and fixing it on God is the same as in making the river Ganges flow uphill towards its source instead of its natural flow towards the ocean. Still, through strenuous efforts and renunciation, the mind must be trained to flow towards God, much against its will, if you want to free yourself from birth and death. There is no other way if you want to escape from worldly miseries and tribulations.

Introspect and always have an inner life. Let a portion of the mind and the hands do their work mechanically. A girl acrobat, while exhibiting her performances, has her attention riveted on the water-pot she bears on her head, although, all the time, she is dancing to various tunes. So does the truly pious man attend to all his business concerns, but has his mind's eye fixed upon the blissful feet of the Lord. This is balance and will lead to integral development.

15 NOVEMBER - RISE ABOVE THE TWO MOODS

In vedanta there are only two kinds of moods - joy, exultation or exhilaration and grief or depression. Now there is joy and five minutes later there is depression - the currents alternate. They belong to the sad Urmis (six waves, i.e. grief, delusion, hunger, thirst, decay and death). People of gloomy moods attract gloomy thoughts from others and from the akasic (etheric) records in the psychic ether. Persons with hope, cheerfulness and confidence attract similar thoughts from others - they are always successful in their attempts. People with negative moods of depression, anger and hatred do positive harm to others - and great damage in the thought world.

Try to eradicate depression through prayer, meditation, counter-thoughts of joy, chanting Om, self-enquiry and singing divine songs. There are various causes for depression - cloudy day, associating with evil persons, indigestion, influence of astral spirits and revival of old impressions of depression. When you get into a talking mood - practise mouna (silence) at once. When you are in a mood of hatred, develop the opposite virtue, love, and the mood will pass quickly. When you feel selfishness arise, do selfless work. When you are in the mood of separateness, mix with others - through service, love, kindness and forgiveness. If you feel lazy, do some active work.

A liberated being is free from all moods - he has become their master. In atman (self) there are no moods, there is only pure consciousness. Identify with Atman and you will easily destroy all moods. However, there is one good mood - the meditative mood. When this manifests, immediately give up reading, writing, talking etc., and begin to meditate. Watch for this kind of mood - when meditation comes by itself, without effort.

Laugh and smile. How can a mind that is dull and gloomy think of God? Try to be happy always. Happiness is your very nature. The spirit of cheerfulness must be cultivated by all aspirants.

With the growth of the mind, the pains will increase. But with its extinction there will be great bliss. Having mastery over the mind, free yourself from the world of perceptions in order that you may be of the nature of jnana or wisdom. Though surrounded by pleasurable or painful objects which disturb the equilibrium of your mind, remain rock-like, and receive all things with equanimity.

16 NOVEMBER - GOD IS FOUND IN SILENCE

Still the mind. Listen. Enter the silence. In silence one becomes aware of his soul-consciousness. Silence is a prerequisite for the apprehension of the reality. Enter the silence, realise the reality.

Silence the tongue; silence the desires; silence the thoughts. You will now enjoy the bliss of the eternal. Love silence. Live in silence. Grow in silence. Spend your life in silence. The truths of the Upanishads are revealed through the grace of God. In silence there is God-realisation. Silence is the peace that passes understanding - samadhi (the superconscious state).

Train yourself to enter a state of ceaseless meditation. Strive diligently, patiently and with genuine humility to attain wisdom. Earnest aspiration and sincerity of purpose are the most precious assets to the seeker after truth. Silence conserves energy and gives peace and strength. You can amass inexhaustible spiritual wealth in silence.

The aspirant should possess tranquility, self-control and compassion. An aspirant should avoid dainty dishes as they induce him to be voluptuous. An aspirant should not indulge in hearing worldly talk as it leaves worldly impressions on the mind and these stand in the way of fixing the mind on God. If you are freed from attachment, you have attained salvation indeed. He who has strong vairagya (dispassion), utter distaste for all pleasures of earth and heaven is first to pursue the path of jnana (wisdom).

He who has not developed strong dispassion, but is attached to the pleasures of this world must tread the path of karma yoga. He who is neither intensely attached to the world nor completely detached from it must take up the path of devotion (bhakti). The delusion of birth and death will only haunt those persons who have passions and darkness. Persons of powerful, pure tendency will be ever free from the fear of birth. Real austerity consists of the control of the senses and the mind, not mortification of the body. The middle path between extreme asceticism and self-indulgence is beneficial. Fasting is external austerity; repentance and meditation are internal austerity.

17 NOVEMBER - YOUR REAL NATURE

Do you know who you are? I shall tell you. Hear me. You are the master of the body and the senses and the mind. You are the master of your life. All power is within you. You have to know this and manifest it.

How can the mind torment you? How can despair overcome you? Despair is a quality of the mind and the mind is your servant. You are all bliss, all light, all strength, all knowledge. You are divinity. You are above and beyond both body and mind. You are immortal satchidananda (existence - knowledge - bliss absolute).

The important thing to know clearly is that you are not the slave of the mind and the senses. You have got into the habit of thinking that their craving is your craving. Now get out of this habit, by constantly reminding yourself that you have nothing to do with the mischievous mind and senses.

Remember constantly that you are not this perishable body. You are not this perishable, changing mind. You are the all-pervading consciousness. You are the eternal seer. You are the eternal witness. Therefore be ever free and blissful.

Intensify your spiritual life. Seek the light of vedanta. Be a flame of the light of the Upanishads. Ever meditate on: "I am the immortal, all-pervading Brahman." Om is the bow, the soul is the arrow and Brahman is the target.

When you realise the effulgent supreme being you shake off all evil and attain the supreme stainless unity. Devote yourself to the holy quest of truth. Devote yourself to the discovery of the ultimate spiritual essence that is all-pervading and interpenetrating.

Withdraw the senses. Look within and search your heart. Dive deep into the recesses of your heart, through deep meditation on the innermost self, the inner ruler. You will doubtless realise your identity with Brahman and get to the heart of the infinite - the heart of infinite joy and bliss.

18 NOVEMBER - DAMA - SENSE CONTROL

Dama is self-restraint. It is control of the senses. It is a vedantic sadhana (practice). It comes after the practice of sama (restraint of mind). It is one of the sad sampat (six-fold wealth). It does not allow the senses to run outwards. It gives strength, peace and concentration. It develops will power. It helps you to disconnect or shut off the mind from the senses, and the senses from the objects. It corresponds to pratyahara (sense-withdrawal) of raja yoga. An objector says, "Why should there be practice of dama when the mind is controlled by sama?" It is a double attack on the mind. The mind operates in conjunction with the senses; the mind will be subdued easily and effectively if you practise dama also. It weakens or thins out the mind.

There is also a deliberate order here. Without viveka (wisdom), vairagya (dispassion) is not powerful. It is viveka that weans the mind from sensual objects and directs it towards the absolute. So viveka comes first. If there is dawn of viveka, vairagya, serenity (sama) will come by itself. It is easy to control the mind if the senses are also controlled. So dama comes after sama. If you practise dama, uparati (satiety) follows; you are disgusted with sensual objects. Serenity and restraint of the indriyas are increased if you have titiksha or power of endurance. When you possess the above qualifications naturally you will have faith (sraddha) and a balanced inner life (samadana). If you are endowed with viveka, vairagya and six wealths, a burning yearning for liberation (mumukshutva) will automatically follow.

Sensual pleasure is the womb of pain. The cause for pain is the pursuit of pleasure. Sensual pleasure is imaginary, illusory, fleeting and tantalising. Abandon pleasure and rejoice in the eternal bliss of the atman. He who has destroyed desire is really a harmonised, peaceful and happy man.

19 NOVEMBER - YOUR REAL ENEMY

The senses are your real foes. They draw you out and disturb your peace of mind. Do not keep company with them. Subdue them. Restrain them. Curb them just as you would curb your enemies on the battlefield. This is not the work of a day. It wants patient and protracted sadhana (practice) for a very long time. Control of the senses is really control of the mind. All the ten senses must be controlled. Starve them to death. Do not give them what they want. Then they will obey your orders implicitly. All worldly minded persons are slaves of their senses, though they are educated, though they possess immense wealth, though they hold judicial and executive powers. If you are a slave of meat-eating, for instance, you will begin to exercise control of your tongue the moment you give up the meat-eating habit entirely for six months. You will consciously feel that you have gained a little supremacy over this troublesome sense of taste which began to revolt against you sometime ago.

Worldly pleasures intensify the desire for enjoying greater pleasures. Hence the minds of worldlings are very restless. There is no satisfaction and mental peace is absent. The mind can never be satisfied, whatever amount of pleasure you may store up for it. The more it enjoys the pleasures, the more it wants them. So people are exceedingly troubled and vexed by their own minds. They are tired of their minds. Hence, in order to remove these botherations and troubles the rishis (sages) thought it best to deprive the mind of all sensual pleasures. When the mind has been concentrated or made extinct, it cannot force one to seek for further pleasure, and all botherations and troubles are removed for ever and the person attains real peace.

The mind can do nothing without the help of the senses. And the senses cannot do anything without the help of the mind. Desire moves the mind and the senses and makes it outgoing. Abandon desires and control the mind. Thinking means externalisation or objectification. Thinking is samsara. Thinking causes identification with the body, with 'I-ness', 'mine-ness', time and space.

Stop this thinking through vairagya (dispassion) and abhyasa (practice). Merge yourself in pure consciousness where there is no thinking. This is the absolution; this is jivanmukti (liberation).

20 NOVEMBER - DISCIPLINE OF THE SENSES

Control the indriyas (senses), through introspection. Destroy the thirst for objects and sense-enjoyments then you will be established in supreme peace. Speak the truth and talk little. Observe silence for two hours daily. Speak only sweet, loving, soft words. Do not go to cinemas; do not look at ladies with a lustful look. When you move in the street look at the tip of the nose; do not look hither and thither. This is discipline of the eye, the organ of sight.

Do not attend dancing parties and do not listen to vulgar music. Give up musical entertainments and listening to worldly conversation. This is the discipline of the ear, the organ of hearing. Do not use scents. This is the discipline of the nose, the organ of smell. Give up salt and sugar for a week. Live on simple food. Fast on ekadasi (eleventh day of the lunar fortnight) or live on milk. This is the discipline of the tongue, the organ of taste.

Observe brahmacharya. Sleep on a hard mat. Walk barefooted. Do not use umbrellas. This is the discipline of the skin, the organ of touch.

To check the wandering mind and to develop concentration, fix your mind on your ishta devata (ideal). Bring the mind back again when it wanders and fix it on the image.

You may think or falsely conjecture that the senses are under your control. You may be duped. All of a sudden you will become their victim. You must have supreme control of all the senses. The senses may become turbulent at any time. Reaction may set in. Beware!

Master the senses, the mind and the intellect, ruthlessly. Do this through enquiry, discrimination, dispassion, devotion and meditation. Anger is born of rajas (restlessness). When desire is not gratified then anger manifests itself. Anger is a form of desire only. Slay this anger through vichara (enquiry), discrimination, patience, love, meditation, and identification with the ever serene Atman.

21 NOVEMBER - STRIVING FOR PERENNIAL HAPPINESS

It is in the nature of man to strive for happiness but all the happiness which he can gain by his actions is only of limited duration. The enjoyments of the senses are transient and the senses themselves are worn out by too much enjoyment. Further, sin generally accompanies these enjoyments and makes men unhappy beyond comparison.

Even if the pleasures of the world are enjoyed as much as their nature permits, if they are as intense, as varied and as uninterrupted as possible - old age still approaches and with it, death. And the enjoyments of heaven are in reality not more enviable than these pleasures of the senses. They are of the same nature although more unmixed and durable, and they come to an end for they are gained by actions. Actions are finite and their effects must also be finite.

In one word, there is necessarily an end to all these enjoyments and what avails us to strive for pleasure which we know cannot sustain us beyond the moment of enjoyment? It is therefore the nature of the man to look out for an unchangeable, infinite happiness (ananta sukha) - which must come from a 'being' in which there is no change if such a being can be found. It is only from him that man attains an unalterable happiness. And if this be so, this 'being' must become the sole object of all his aspirations and actions.

This 'being' is not very far - he resides in your heart. He is the sakshi chaitanya (witness consciousness) who witnesses the activities of your buddhi (intellect). He is the nirguna Brahman of the Upanishads.

TRUE BEING. True being is that which knows no bounds, neither physical nor intellectual. It is unbounded, spiritual being. The nature of approach must befit the nature of the object approached. The pathway can be known only when the destination is known. The indivisible, absolute and conscious nature of the reality signifies that life on earth should be lived according to rigid laws - laws of dispassion towards external existence and active awareness of the self as an unlimited being. It also shows that all forms of physical and even intellectual indulgence are deviations from eternal truth. It shows that every desire for objectification of consciousness is suicidal in the real sense.

22 NOVEMBER - SOUL POWER

O man! Do not be discouraged when sorrows, difficulties and tribulations manifest in the daily battle of life. Thou art the master of thy destiny. Thou art divine. Live up to it, feel it, realise it. Draw up spiritual strength and courage from within. Learn the ways to tap the source. Dive deep within. Sink down. Plunge into the sacred waters of immortality. You will be refreshed, renovated and vivified.

Understand the laws of the universe. Move tactfully in this world. Learn the secrets of nature. Learn the best ways to control the mind. Conquer the mind. Conquest of the mind is really conquest of nature and the world.

Do not murmur or grumble when troubles and sorrows descend upon you. Difficulties strengthen your will, augment your power of endurance and turn your mind towards God. Face them with a smile. In your weakness lies your real strength. Conquer the difficulties one by one. This is the beginning of a new spiritual life, a life of expansion, glory and divine splendour. Expand, grow. Build up all positive virtues - fortitude, patience and courage. Start a new life.

Have a new angle of vision. Arm yourself with discrimination, cheerfulness, discernment, alacrity and undaunted spirit. A brilliant future is awaiting you. Let the past be buried. You can work miracles. Do not give up hope. You can neutralise the effect of evil influences and the antagonistic dark forces that may come against you. You can nullify destiny - many have done this. Assert. Recognise. Realise. Thou art the immortal self - claim thy birthright now.

You have created your destiny through thoughts and actions. You can undo them by right thinking and right action. Wrong thinking is the root cause of human sufferings. "I am the immortal self" - this is right thinking. Work in terms of unity - work unselfishly - work with atman bhava (feeling that the self is all). This is right action.

There is no such thing as sin. Sin is only a mistake; it is a mental creation. The baby soul must commit some mistakes during the process of evolution. Mistakes are your best teachers. Think, "I am pure atman", and the idea of sin will be blown in the air.

23 NOVEMBER - DIFFICULTIES STRENGTHEN YOU

Difficulties come to test you and thereby to help you by strengthening your will, patience and power of endurance. Be bold. Be cheerful. Be calm, cool and collected at all times, even in the face of difficulties. There is no spiritual sadhana (practice) completely free from obstacles and difficulties. God sends consolation, encouragement at every step to the sincere aspirant. Defeat and failure have their purpose. Criticism too has its uses.

Be free from depression and irritation. Remain unmoved by criticism or praise. Be steadfast. Stand firm like a rock - unshakable by emotional storms, frustrations and defeats. A spiritual aspirant is backed up by the whole spiritual world. All saints lend their invisible help and support to such a struggler. You are never really left alone. You will get help from saints and yogis internally. Their spiritual vibrations will elevate and inspire you.

Without great patience and perseverance, the spiritual quest becomes an uphill task. No half-measures will do on the spiritual path. Give your whole heart to truth and to sadhana. Have faith. Be firm. Unfold. Attain. All defeats are transitory. All set-backs are needed experiences. Muster up your courage. March forward. Success and victory are yours. Have patience first, second and last! This should be the motto for those seeking the inner light.

Great things have small beginnings. All growth is gradual. To be perfectly unperturbed, by anything, in all circumstances, looking upon all things as passing phenomena, ever feeling a distinct, silent witness to all the experiences of life - these are the marks of a spiritual aspirant.

These qualities have to be carefully and consciously cultivated. They do not come in a day. But they do come gradually by faithful practice. An unseen power guides and guards you. Feel his power and presence. He who is endowed with dispassion, compassion, serenity, self-control, and who has given up the desire for this world and the next, and who has control over his mind and senses, is fit to tread the spiritual path.

24 NOVEMBER - MOST IMPORTANT SADHANA

Man is a mixture of three ingredients. These are the human element, the brutal instinct and the divine ray. He is endowed with a finite intellect, a perishable body, a little knowledge and a little power. This makes him distinctly human. Lust, anger and hatred belong to his brutal nature.

The reflection of cosmic intelligence is at the back of his intellect. So he is an image of God. When the brutal instincts die, when this ignorance is rent asunder, when he is able to bear insult and injury, then he becomes one with the divine.

A thirsting aspirant is one who practises self-denial. He always tries to feel that the body does not belong to him. If anyone beats or cuts him, either his hand or throat, he should remain quiet. He should not speak even one single harsh word - because the body is not his. He starts his sadhana (practice) saying: "I am not this body. I am not this mind. Chidananda Rupa Sivoham."

One harsh word throws a man off balance and a little disrespect upsets him. How weak he has become, despite his boasted intellect, his high position in society, his degrees, his diplomas and titles.

Bear insult, Bear injury. This is the essence of all sadhana. This is the most important sadhana. If you succeed in this, you can very easily enter the illimitable domain of eternal bliss. Nirvikalpa samadhi (superconscious state) will come by itself. This is the most difficult sadhana. But it is easy for those who have burning vairagya (dispassion) and true yearning for liberation.

First you must become like a block of stone. Only then you will be established in this sadhana. Now nothing can affect you. Abuse, ridicule, mockery, insult, persecution - none of these can have any influence on you.

Life is God in expression.
Life is joy.
Life is the flooding bliss of the spirit.
Life is the fight for fullness and perfection.
Life is a battle for attaining supreme independence.

25 November- Helpers On the Spiritual Path

The spiritual path may in the beginning appear to be very hard, thorny, precipitous and slippery. Renunciation of objects gives pain at the outset. If you struggle hard to tread the path, if you once

make a strong determination and firm resolve, then it becomes very easy. You get interest and a new joy. Your heart expands and you have a broad outlook on life; you have a new wide vision. You feel the help from the invisible hands of the indweller of your heart. Your doubts are cleared by themselves, by getting the answer from within – you hear the still, sweet voice of God. There is indescribable thrill of divine ecstasy from within. There is ineffable, unabating, undiminishing, undecaying spiritual bliss. This gives new strength and footing on the path becomes firmer and firmer. The jivanmuktas (liberated sages), yogis, nityasiddhas(eternally perfect ones), amara-purushas(immortal souls)and chiranjivas(deathless souls) lend their helping hands to the struggling aspirants. The aspirants feel this actually – the feeling of loneliness and of being neglected and forsaken vanishes entirely.

Doubt or uncertainty is a great obstacle in the path of self-realisation. It must be removed by study of religious books, satsanga(holy company), vichara(enquiry) and reasoning. Again and again it will raise its head to mislead the aspirant. It should be killed beyond resurrection by certainty of conviction and firm unshakable faith based on reasoning.

An aspirant should always watch whether the sight of an unpleasant object or any unpleasant sound causes irritation or agitation in his mind. He should try to eradicate this irritation- he should have perfect control of temper. A weak aspirant, though strong in concentration, is over-come by idleness and a strong aspirant, if weak in concentration, is overcome by tossing of the mind. Concentration and energy should therefore be well balanced.

Stick to your ideas, convictions and principles – whether you become popular or unpopular, even if the whole world opposes you, Dig a deep pit in one place. Centralise all your efforts. Even so, try to imbibe the spiritual teachings of one spiritual preceptor. Drink deeply from one man- sit at his feet for some years. For the preliminary practices of japa (repition of God’s name), ahimsa (non-violence), and truth and to develop mercy, devotion, love, tolerance etc., you do not need a guru. You have to do all these things yourself. When you are ready, the guru will appear before you of his own accord.

26 NOVEMBER - GLORY OF THE SELF

Believe in the self. Draw power from within. Dive deep into the source and come back quite refreshed and invigorated. Have unshakable faith that nothing can ever overpower these. Chant Om Om Om when gloom tries to overpower these. Rejoice in thy own self. Have contentment in thy own self. Never seek happiness from outside.

A timid man is unfit for the attainment of self-realisation. Have no attachment for this mortal body of flesh and bone. Cast if off like slough, just as the snake throws away its skin. Be prepared to give up the body at any moment. Make a strong resolve : I will die or realise the self.

Do not lose heart when you are in adverse circumstances. Become a real hero and fight your enemies within - the mind, indriyas (senses), vasanas (tendencies), samskaras (mental impressions) and trishnas (cravings) which have robbed you of your atmic jewel. The spiritual battlefield demands great valour, patience, perseverance, strength, courage and skill. Temptations will manifest without a moment's notice - you will be bewildered. There may be no time to detect them, so always be on the alert.

You came alone, naked and weeping. You will go alone, naked and weeping. Then why are you proud of your false wealth and false knowledge? Become humble, meek. You will conquer the world with humility. Become pure in thought, word and deed. This is the secret of spiritual life.

Birth and death, bondage and freedom, pleasure and pain, gain and loss – all are mental creations. Transcend the pairs of opposites. You were never born; you will never die. Thou art the immortal self always. Thou art ever free in the three periods of time. It is the physical body that comes and goes. The self is all-full, all-pervading, infinite and part-less.

Recognise that you are the living truth, that you are inseparable from that one essence, the substratum of all these illusory names and forms, these false, shadowy appearances. Get firmly established in Brahman. Now you are invulnerable.

Rely on your own self, your inner spiritual strength. Do not depend on money, friends or anyone. Friends when put to the test will desert you. Lord Buddha never even trusted his own disciples. Become absolutely free.

27 NOVEMBER - PERFECTION AWAITS YOU

The circle of darkness and degeneracy has reached its climax. Come now, arise victorious and step up towards the zenith of perfection that awaits you. Live with a definite purpose - do not roam about aimlessly. Walk with a definite aim. Climb the hill of knowledge steadily and reach the summit of the temple of Brahman, the grand abode of the life immortal.

In the spiritual path there are constant failures and setbacks. Repeated endeavour, constant vigilance and undaunted perseverance are needed. When the heart's knots are gradually loosened, when the vasanas (tendencies) are gradually thinned out, when the bonds of karma are gradually loosened, when ignorance is dispelled, when weakness vanishes, you will become more and more peaceful, strong and serene. You will get more and more light from within. You will become more and more divine.

Hard enough is it to purify the lower nature, difficult enough is it to practise concentration and meditation, but vigilance, perseverance, constant practise, steady and persistent effort, company of sages, resolute will and strong determination, will obviate all difficulties and render the path easy, pleasant and attractive. Fight with the mind bravely. Go on fighting with an undaunted heart. At the end of your battle you will attain the illimitable dominion of eternal bliss, the sweet abode of immortality, the immaculate, imperishable self or Brahman.

Despair not; light is on the path. Serve all. Love truth. Be serene. Meditate regularly. You will soon attain the life beatitude, the silence, the supreme peace. Even when you get a glimpse of the truth, of the supreme, your whole life will be changed. You will be a changed being. You will have a new heart and a new wisdom. A new thrill of spiritual current will pass through your entire being. A wave of spiritual bliss will sweep over you. This state is indescribable.

28 NOVEMBER - THE WORLD NEEDS SANYASINS

Every religion has a band of anchorites who lead a life of seclusion and meditation. There are bhikkus in Buddhism, fakirs in Islam, sufistic fakirs in Sufism, fathers and brothers in Christianity. The glory of a religion will be absolutely lost if you remove the hermits or sanyisins or those who lead the life of renunciation and divine contemplation. It is these people who maintain and preserve the religions of the world. It is these people who give solace to the householders when they are in trouble and distress. They bring hope to the hopeless, joy to the depressed, strength to the weak and courage to the timid by imparting the knowledge of yoga and vedanta, and the significance of, "That thou art."

True renunciation is the renunciation of all passions, desires and egoism. If you have a stainless mind, a mind free from attachment, egoism and passion, you are a sanyasin - no matter whether you live in a forest or in the bustle of a city, whether you wear white cloth or an orange coloured robe, whether you shave your head or keep a long tuft of hair.

Shave the mind. Someone asked Guru Nanak, "O saint, why have you not shaved your head? You are a sanyasin." Guru Nanak replied: "My dear friend, I have shaved my mind." In fact, the mind should be cleanly shaved. Shaving the mind consists of getting rid of all attachments, egoism, infatuation, lust, greed and anger. That is real shaving. External shaving of the head has no meaning so long as there is internal craving.

Many have not understood what true renunciation is. Renunciation of physical objects is no renunciation at all. True renunciation lies in the abnegation of the mind. It consists of renouncing all desires and egoism, and not world-existence. The real renunciation is the renunciation of the ego. If you can renounce this, you have renounced everything in the world. If the subtle egoism is given up, identification with the body goes away automatically.

29 NOVEMBER - WHAT TO RENOUNCE

Mere outward giving up of things is nothing. It is not real renunciation. Real tyaga or sanyas (renunciation) consists in absolute renunciation of all vasanas (tendencies) and the destruction of the heart-knot of ignorance, the chit-jada-granthi (confusion between the conscious subject and inert object).

What is to be renounced is the bheda buddhi (divisive intellect) which says, "I am superior to that man". "I am the body." And the kartritva abhimana which thinks, "I am the doer". There is no use in your renouncing your home, wife and children. You must destroy moha (attachment) for the body, children, money, house, property - then you will get that state of immortality from which you will never return.

He, who has merely withdrawn himself from worldly possessions, cannot be regarded as having renounced the world altogether; but he who is living in actual contact with the world, finds out its faults. He who is freed from every passion and whose soul depends on nothing may be said to have truly renounced the world. Read the story of Raja Sikhidhwaja and Queen Chudala in the Yoga Vasishta.

The spirit cometh and goeth. Therefore you will have to be careful always in nourishing and protecting your spiritual samskaras (impressions) with burning vairagya (dispassion), intense and constant sadhana (practice) and burning mumukshutva (desire for liberation). Increase your good samskaras. Develop them. Multiply them.

People do not want to remove mala (impurity) by selfless service and vikshepa (restlessness of mind) with upasana (devotion). They think that bhakti and service are nothing. They at once jump to open the kundalini and raise the brahmakara vritti (the feeling of Brahmin is the all). They will only break down their legs.

Serve and worship; jnana and yoga will come by themselves, kundalini will be awakened by itself.

30 NOVEMBER - EXTERNAL RENUNCIATION IS NECESSARY

Renunciation of family life is the beginning of self-surrender. He who is endowed with burning vairagya (dispassion) and discrimination, one who is really earnest for his spiritual rejuvenation, can also do complete self-surrender even though he is living in the world.

In and through the world he realises the Lord, by complete surrender of his whole being to him. But it is only very few who are capable of doing this. This is because worldly life is beset with innumerable obstacles and temptations. And it is hard for the aspirant to attain complete dispassion in the midst of so many dissipations and distractions.

Therefore renunciation of family life makes the path easier for the aspirant. It also makes it smoother. The seed is now sown. The aspirant then goes to his preceptor and falls at his feet. Now the seed germinates.

The aspirant now starts the service of the guru. As he advances in his devotion and sincere service, his surrender becomes more and more perfect and complete. His heart becomes purer and purer and gradually the light of knowledge dawns in him. Now he cognises the supreme atman which pervades all, everywhere.

The actions performed by the sadhaka (seeker) after renunciation, do not bind him because he has offered all his actions unto his preceptor or God. He does not do any action which can be considered selfish.

Thus, through service of one's preceptor, with utter self-dedication, his heart becomes purified and, ultimately, the Lord becomes his preceptor. Now he is completely surrendered to the Lord and he attains the highest intuition.

1 DECEMBER - PERFECT RENUNCIATION

Vedanta does not want you to renounce the world. It wants you to change your mental attitude and give up this false, illusory 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness'. The snake charmer removes only the two poisonous fangs of the cobra. The snake remains the same. It hisses, raises its hood and shows its fangs. In fact, it does everything as before. The snake charmer has changed his mental attitude towards the snake. He has a feeling now that it has no poisonous fangs. Even so, you must remove the two poisonous fangs of the mind, namely, 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness' only. Then you can allow the mind to go wherever it likes. Then you will always have the feeling of the presence of God.

You must also renounce the attachment to renunciation, which is very deep rooted. You must renounce the idea: "I have renounced everything; I am a great renunciate". This attachment of aspirants is a greater evil than that of the householders: "I am a landlord; I am a brahmana, etc".

Not by shaving the head, not by dress, not by egoistic action is liberation to be attained. He who possesses wisdom is a real sanyasin (monk). Wisdom is the sign of a sanyasin. The wooden staff does not make a sanyasin. He is the real sanyasin of wisdom who is conscious of his absolute nature even in his dreams just as he is during the waking period. He is the greatest knower of Brahman. He is the greatest of sanyasins.

Perfect renunciation is born of discrimination. Dispassion should not be mild and half-hearted. It should be a burning flame of disgust for everything that is seen and that is not seen. Nothing but the state of final liberation is to be the ideal for attainment. There should be no desire for wife, husband, children and worldly activity. The aspirant must be encircled by the fence of dispassion on all sides.

Action is for the man of the world; the wisdom is for the sanyasin who has risen above worldliness. Only the man of renunciation with knowledge attains Brahman, and none else. Without perfect renunciation, it is impossible to pursue the path of the knowledge of Brahman.

2 DECEMBER - FAITH IS THE GREATEST THING

Faith is sraddha. Faith is the greatest thing in the world. Even the greatest philosopher has faith as his stronghold. No intellectualism can prove good if it is unsupported by faith. The whole world stands on faith, is guided by faith.

Religion has faith as its root. One cannot prove God if he has no faith in God. And this faith is the outcome of samskaras (past mental impressions). Faith is guided by impressions of actions done in previous births.

Blind faith should be turned into rational faith through understanding. Bhakti (devotion) is the development of faith. Jnana (self-knowledge) is the development of bhakti. Faith leads to the final experience. Whatever a person strongly believes in, that he experiences and that he becomes.

This whole world is a product of faithful imagination. If you have no faith in the world, the world does not exist. If you have no faith in sensual pleasure, you will not get pleasure from sensual objects. If you have no faith in God, you will never reach perfection. Wrong faith can even turn existence into non-existence. Faith is the fundamental necessity for spiritual sadhana (practice).

Aspiration is a development of faith. The flame of faith burns as the conflagration of spiritual aspiration for moksha (liberation). The devotee longs to have union with the beloved - he has no sleep, no rest. He always contemplates how to attain the object of his love. He prays, he sings, he gets mad with his Lord. Divine madness overtakes the devotee and he completely loses his personality in the aspiration for attaining God. This is called self-surrender.

You must have an ideal to live for - otherwise you will be heedless, depressed and negative. Understand well before you take a step. Have a clear cut ideal and then have right attempt. Faith in God, faith in oneself, faith in the guru (preceptor), faith in the wise teachings, faith in all that is good and noble - this is the sap of life.

3 DECEMBER - FAITH VERSUS REASON

Faith is first and reason is second. Faith is life and doubt is death. Reason is powerless to know God. Faith alone takes one to God. He who has faith has everything. He who has no faith has nothing. Have intense, unswerving faith - in the measure in which you have faith, you will achieve.

Faith brings God closer and reason puts Him far away. Faith is not blind belief - it grows out of the wisdom of the heart. Do total surrender to the Lord - keep nothing back, not even a little pride. Surrender yourself and your all to the Lord.

Say to the Lord: "O Lord! Give me only that which is best for me, because only you know what that is." A life of faith and devotion and of absolute faith in the name of the Lord will always be successful in the long run. Through love, faith and devotion alone is God-realisation possible.

Prayer releases God's power. It should consist of confession, praise and petition. Prayer is a spiritual tonic - it purges the mind of all its impurities - such as desire, attachment, anger, lust, etc. It also strengthens a man's aspiration and brings him closer to God. It brings him into the presence of God.

Pray to the Lord for strength and help as soon as you get out of bed in the morning. Satsanga (the company of holy men), faith, single-minded devotion to one's ideal, intense love for God, bhava (feeling), and prema (divine love) bring the devotee face to face with God.

Trust in the Lord with all thy heart. Acknowledge him in all thy ways. He will direct thy spiritual path. God helps the sincere aspirant at every step. God will help you too. He will bless you, inspire you and throw light upon the path. Never mind about the external environments. Create your own internal environments, wherever you are.

4 DECEMBER - BALANCE OF MIND

Samadhana is mental balance. There is perfect concentration now. This is the fruit of the practices of sama (control of mind), dama (control of the senses), uparati (turning away), titiksha (endurance) and shraddha (faith). It is fixing the mind on atman (self) without allowing it to run towards objects and have its own way. It is self settledness. Sri Sankaracharya defines in "Atma-Anatma Viveka": "Whenever a mind engaged in sravana (hearing) and the rest wanders to any worldly object or desire, and finding it worthless, returns to the performance of the three exercises – such returning is called samadhana."

The mind is free from anxiety amid pains. There is indifference amid pleasures. There is stability of mind or mental poise. The aspirant or practitioner lives without attachment. He neither likes nor dislikes. He has a great deal of strength of mind and internal peace. He has unruffled supreme peace of mind.

Some aspirants have peace of mind when they live in seclusion, when there are no distracting elements or factors. They complain of great tossing of mind (viksepa) when they come to a city, when they mix with people. They are completely upset. They cannot do any meditation in a crowded place, This is a weakness. This is not achievement in samadhana. There is no balance of mind or equanimity in these persons. Only when a student can keep his balance of mind even in a battlefield when there is a shower of bullets all round, as he does in a solitary cave in the Himalayas, can he be really said to be fully established in samadhana.

Lord Krishna says in the Gita: "Perform all actions, O Dhananjaya, dwelling in union with the divine, renouncing attachments, and balanced evenly in success and failure." This is samadhana. Again you will find in the Gita: "The disciplined self, moving among the sense objects with senses freed from attraction and repulsion, mastered by the self, goeth to peace." This is also samadhana.

5 DECEMBER - SUCH IS THE MIND

There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point. You are born to concentrate the mind on God after collecting the mental rays that are dissipated on various objects. That is your important duty. You forget the duty on account of moha (attachment) to the family, children, name and fame, money, power and position.

Mind is compared to quicksilver, because its rays are scattered over various objects. It is compared to a monkey, because it jumps from one object to another. It is compared to moving air, because it is restless. It is compared to a furious elephant, because of its passionate impetuosity.

Mind is known by the name 'great bird', because it jumps from one object to another just as a bird jumps from one twig to another, from one tree to another. Raja yoga teaches us how to concentrate the mind and then how to ransack the innermost recess of our mind.

Concentration is opposed to sensuous desires, as is bliss to flurry and worry, sustained thinking to perplexity, applied thinking to sloth and torpor, rapture to ill-will.

So long as the thoughts of one are not thoroughly destroyed through persistent practice, he should ever be concentrating his mind on one truth at a time. Through such unremitting practice, one-pointedness of the mind will accrue and instantly all the hosts of thoughts will vanish.

To remove this tossing of the mind and various obstacles which stand in the way of one-pointedness of the mind, the practice of concentration on one thing alone should be made.

The more the mind is fixed on God, the more strength you will acquire. More concentration means more energy. Concentration opens the inner chambers of love or the realm of eternity. Concentration is a source of spiritual strength.

Fix the mind on the atman. Fix the mind on the all-pervading pure intelligence and self-luminous effulgence. Stand firm in Brahman. Then you will become 'Brahma Samastha' (established in Brahman).

6 DECEMBER - FREEDOM: YOUR BIRTHRIGHT

Freedom is man's birthright. Freedom is knowledge, peace and bliss. Consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, all are attempting to attain this freedom. One nation is fighting another on the battlefield for freedom. A robber robs in order to obtain freedom from want - though his movement may be crooked and circuitous. Every movement of your foot is towards freedom or existence-knowledge bliss.

The real reason is that there is in you the immortal, self-effulgent soul or atman which is one without a second, which has no rival, which is the inner ruler, which is the support for the whole universe. In reality, you are this atman. That is the reason why you have such a feeling and desire.

In every heart, there is this desire for freedom, this all-consuming passion for liberty. Freedom is the birthright of man. Freedom is the very nature of Brahman or the eternal soul. Brahman is eternally free. The desire for freedom is there even in the lowliest of God's creatures. Freedom is an attribute of the soul, born with you. No force, no known human device, can suppress that desire. Freedom's flame is ever burning bright. Freedom or liberation is the ultimate goal of man. Freedom is liberation from the thraldom of mind and matter.

Real freedom is not merely political or economic, though political and economic freedom is essential for the welfare of a people. Real freedom is lordship over oneself. It is the freedom of the self. It is immortality; it is perfection. It is attainable only by slow and painful stages.

From time pass into eternity. This is freedom or emancipation. Still the mind. Herein lies freedom and bliss eternal. Real freedom is freedom from birth and death, freedom from the bondage of the flesh and mind, freedom from the bonds of karma and freedom from attachment to the body. Real freedom is freedom from egoism and desires, freedom from thoughts, likes and dislikes, freedom from lust, anger, greed and pride. Real freedom is identification with the supreme self. Real freedom is to realise the self. Real freedom is merging in the absolute.

Freedom is in detachment, desirelessness, mindlessness. Eradication and extinction of desires lead to the sublime state of supreme bliss and perfect freedom.

7 DECEMBER - MUMUKSHUTVA

Mumukshutva is intense desire for liberation or deliverance from the wheel of birth and death with its concomitant evils of old age, disease, delusion and sorrow. If one is equipped with the previous three qualifications, viz., viveka (wisdom), vairagya (dispassion) and sad sampat (six virtues), mumukshutva will come by itself.

The mind moves towards the source of its own accord, because it has lost its hold now on external objects. It has no resting place in this objective universe. Purification of the mind and mental discipline form the rock-bottom foundation of yoga. When this is effected, the longing for liberation dawns by itself. Mumukshutva must be of a burning type. If burning mumukshutva is coupled with burning vairagya, self-realisation will come within the twinkling of an eye. Generally the vast majority of people have got a dull type of vairagya and mumukshutva. So they do not succeed in their attempts. If one finds that he has not got burning mumukshutva, he must practise the other three sadhanas (practices) vigorously till he acquires intense longing for attaining salvation or immortality. That aspirant who is endowed with these four qualifications should hear the srutis (scriptures) from a Brahma Nishta guru (preceptor who is established in Brahman), and then reflect and meditate on the inner self. He will soon get self-realisation.

The aspirant should practise all the four means to a maximum degree. Proficiency in one sadhana alone will not make you perfect. There is a definite significance in the sequence of the four sadhanas. That aspirant who is in possession of the four means is a blessed divinity on the surface of this earth. He is Brahman himself. He must be adored and worshipped. My silent salutations unto such exalted souls!

Open yourself fully to the divine influence. Develop a burning desire for the attainment of God-realisation and burning dispassion (vairagya) for worldly enjoyments. Abandon all worries. Abandon all worldly ambitions and mundane desires. Soar high in the realm of higher spiritual knowledge. Show your moral courage and spiritual strength now, O Ram!

8 DECEMBER - IMPORTANCE OF GURU BHAKTI

It is universally admitted that an efficient teacher is needed in all branches of knowledge, in this physical plane and that physical, mental, moral and spiritual culture and growth can only be had through the help and guidance of a competent teacher or master. This is a universal, inexorable law of nature. Why then do you deny the application of this universally accepted law in the realm of spirituality as well?

Spiritual knowledge is a matter of guruparanpara - it is handed down from guru to disciple. Study the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. You will have a comprehensive understanding of this truth.

Some aspirants do meditation for some years independently. Later on they feel the actual necessity for a guru. They come across some obstacles in the way and do not know how to proceed further. Then they begin to search for a guru.

The student and the teacher should live together, as father and devoted son, with extreme sincerity and devotion. The aspirant should have an eager receptive mind, ready to imbibe the teachings of the master. Then only will the aspirant be spiritually benefitted. Otherwise there is not the least hope of the spiritual uplift of the aspirant and the complete regeneration of his old unregenerate nature.

Once Sankaracharya wanted to test the devotion of his disciple Padmapada. The river Kaveri was in flood. Sankara was standing on the bank of the river and Padmapada was standing on the other bank. Sankara beckoned Padmapada to come to him immediately. There was no boat. Padmapada did not care, he at once jumped into the river. He did not know how to swim. This is real devotion. Through the grace of Sankaracharya, Padmapada walked quite easily on the water. At each step a lotus flower appeared. This is how he got the name Padmapada (lotus in the feet).

There is no hope of salvation for the deluded soul without the healing, magnetic touch and guidance of the spiritual preceptor. It is the guru only who can effect a radical change in the angle of vision of men and raise them to sublime, transcendental heights of eternal life in atman (self) with cosmic consciousness, divine glory, atmic effulgence and splendour.

9 DECEMBER - GLORY OF THE GURU

The guru is God himself manifesting in a personal form to guide the aspirant. Grace of God takes the form of the guru. To see the guru is to see God. The guru is united with God. He inspires devotion in others and his presence purifies all.

The guru is verily a link between the individual and the immortal. He is a being who has raised himself from this to That, and thus has free and unhampered access into both realms. He stands, as it were, upon the threshold of immortality; and, bending down he raises the struggling individuals with one hand, while with the other he lifts them up into the imperium of everlasting joy and infinite truth-consciousness.

The true guru is Brahman himself. He is an ocean of bliss, knowledge and mercy. He is the captain of your soul, the fountain of joy. He removes all your troubles, sorrows and obstacles. He shows you the right divine path and tears your veil of ignorance. He makes you immortal and divine, transmuting your lower, diabolical nature. He gives you the rope of knowledge, and takes you up when you are drowning in this ocean of births and deaths. Do not consider him to be only a man, for, if you do, you are a beast. Worship your guru and bow to him with reverence. Guru is God. A word from him is a word from God. He need not teach anything. Even his presence or company is elevating, inspiring and stirring, his very company being self-illumination. Living in his company is spiritual education. Read the Granth-Saheb (the holy scripture of the Sikh religion). You will come to know the greatness of the guru.

Man can learn only from man, and hence God teaches through a human body. In your guru, you have your human ideal of perfection, the pattern into which you wish to mould yourself. Your mind will readily be convinced that such a great soul is fit to be worshipped and revered.

Guru is the door to liberation, the gateway to the transcendental truth consciousness. But, it is the aspirant that has to enter through it. The guru is a help, but the actual task of practical spiritual practice falls on the aspirant himself.

The guru's tender smile radiates light, bliss, joy, knowledge, peace. He is a blessing to suffering humanity. Whatever he says is Upanishadic teaching. The guru knows the spiritual path. He knows the pitfalls and snares on the way. He gives timely warning to his students. He showers his grace on their heads. All agonies, miseries, tribulations, taints of worldliness, etc., vanish in his presence.

10 DECEMBER - KNOW THE GURU

Guru leads man to God. Guru, mantra (mystic formula) and devata (deity) form a unity. Guru is present in the mantra which he enlivens and communicates. The mantra is the body of the devata. The guru is the embodiment of the deity that is invoked.

True guru is living God. Devotion to guru trains your heart and prepares for devotion to the Lord. Gurus are plenty but good disciples are very rare. When the disciple is ready the guru appears. He who has a guru can alone know Brahman and the knowledge received from a teacher, alone becomes perfect.

Initiation is necessary to go along the spiritual path. Guru shows you the path. When you are initiated your body and mind become purified. The highest spiritual wisdom experienced by the seers of truth in ancient times, has been passed down to the present day, through an unbroken line of traditional teachers.

Have self-control, tranquillity, sincerity and humility. Then approach the spiritual preceptor. Then alone you will be benefitted. Hear silently - anything that your guru may say - hear with faith and bhava. Adapt yourself to his ways. He who serves the preceptor and follows his instructions gains the greatest benefit. He who speaks ill of his guru and does not follow his instructions loses most.

A perfect guru is learned in the scriptures and is desireless. He is a boundless ocean of mercy. He is a full knower of Brahman. He is a friend and a guide to those who have surrendered to him. Guru is the word. The word is guru. Though God is indescribable you can see and realise God through the guru.

Here are the characteristics of a real guru. If you find them in any man accept him at once as your guru. A real guru is one who has full knowledge of the self and the vedas. He dispels the doubts of aspirants. He has equal vision and balanced mind. He is free from likes and dislikes, joy and sorrow, egoism, anger, lust, greed, pride, etc. He is an ocean of mercy. In his presence one gets peace and elevation of mind - all doubts are cleared. The guru does not expect anything from anybody. He has an exemplary character. He is full of joy and bliss. He is in search of real aspirants.

11 DECEMBER - NECESSITY FOR A GURU

Ishvara (God) is guru of gurus. He removes the veil of ignorance and blesses the ignorant jiva (soul). The aspirant should regard his immediate guru – in the physical form - as an incarnation of that Guru of all gurus. He should have equal devotion to him. Guru in physical form is the main source and embodiment of all good and happiness that accrues to the disciple.

The disciple should realise the supreme necessity for obeying the guru's commands and behests. He should keep his faith in the guru unsullied and staunch. Lay bare to your guru the secrets of your heart. The more you do so, the greater the sympathy. And this means an accession of strength to you in the struggle against sin and temptation. A spiritual teacher actually transmits his spiritual power to his disciple.

A certain spiritual vibration of the satguru is actually transferred to the mind of the disciple. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa actually transmitted his spiritual power to Swami Vivekananda. Lord Jesus did the same to his disciples. This is the master's touch.

It is he who transmutes the little jiva (soul) into great Brahman, infinite. It is he who overhauls the old, wrong, vicious nature (samskaras) of aspirants and awakens them to the attainment of knowledge of the self. It is he who uplifts the jivas from the quagmire of body and samsara (worldly life), who removes the veil of avidya (ignorance), all doubts, fears, etc. It is he who awakens the kundalini and opens the eye of inner intuition.

Never look into the defects of the guru. Deify the guru. Guru, Ishvara, Brahman, Om, truth, are all one. Strictly obey the guru and carry out his orders. You must think that underneath the name and the form of the guru there is the all-pervading, pure consciousness. In course of time the physical form will vanish and you will realise your own self, the pure Brahmic consciousness that lies at the back of the physical form of your guru.

Once you have taken a man as your guru you should never change even if you get a man with greater siddhis (development). Then only you will have strong faith. And through this strong faith you will realise God in the guru.

12 DECEMBER - THE DISCIPLE'S DUTY

People want to have contact with an avatara (divine incarnation), without being endowed with the proper qualifications. Even if an avatara appears before you, you will not be able to recognise him. You have not got the eyes to see him. You will take him for an ordinary man.

It is only a saint who can recognise a saint. Only a Jesus can understand a Jesus. Even if you live with a saint for a considerable time, you will not be able to fathom or know him.

A beginner on the spiritual path should have various upa-gurus (assistant gurus). He must prepare himself gradually. He must get spiritual instructions from them. He must follow their instructions strictly. He should make himself fit to approach a Brahma nista guru (a guru who is already established in Brahman). He should practise meditation and he should see the Lord in meditation.

An aspirant should develop various satvic (divine) virtues. These are all enumerated in the Bhagavad Gita, chapters thirteen and sixteen. These are virtues such as humility, fearlessness, freedom from anger, a forgiving tendency, tranquillity, self-restraint and so on. He must also practise yama (self-restraint) and niyama (discipline). This is his work. The guru will not do this.

But nowadays people want to practise a comfortable yoga, lying in an easy chair. They do not want to practise any vigorous tapas (penance) or sadhana (spiritual discipline). They expect everything to come by the grace of the guru. They even seem to expect him to place self-realisation before them, like a ready-made betel-leaf - so they can just take it and swallow it easily!

All saints and yogis are ready to receive you with outstretched hands and love - if you have the real eyes to behold them, if you have the real heart to unite with them, if you have the real earnestness and longing to be in their company, if you have a real thirsting for God-realisation - and if you are really hungry to eat the sweet divine manna of the illimitable domain of bliss of the self.

13 DECEMBER - GURU BHAKTI

You will find in the Gita : "Learn thou this by discipleship, by enquiry and by service. The wise, the seers of the essence of things, will instruct thee in wisdom." (Chapter IV - Verse 34.)

The guru must not only be a Brahma-shrotriya (well-versed), but a Brahma-nishtha (established in Brahman) as well. Mere study of books cannot make one a guru. One who has studied the vedas and who has direct knowledge of the atman, through anubhava (direct experience), is a guru. If you find peace in the presence of a holy man (mahatma) and if your doubts are removed in his presence, you can take him as your guru. When the guru gives the mantra to his disciples, he gives with it his own power.

Just as water flows in a river, so also jnana (knowledge) and bhakti (devotion) are ever flowing from a sage. Only a thirsty man drinks water. So too, a thirsty aspirant, who has implicit faith in his guru and is eager to imbibe his teachings, can drink the nectar from him. The student can imbibe from his guru only in proportion to the intensity of his faith in him.

The guru tests the students in various ways. Some students misunderstand him and lose their faith in him. Hence they are not benefitted. But those that stand the tests, boldly, come out successful in the end.

The periodical examinations in the 'University of Sages' are very stiff indeed. Once a great sage (Gorakhnath) asked some students to climb a tall tree and throw themselves head downwards onto a very sharp trident (trisula). Many of the faithless students kept quiet. But one faithful student at once climbed up the tree with lightning speed and hurled himself down. He was protected by the invisible hand of the sage and had immediate self-realisation. This man had no deha-adhyasa (feeling, "I am body"), but the others had strong attachment for their bodies.

Once Guru Govind Singh tested his students. He said: "My dear disciples, if you have real devotion towards me, let six of you come forward and give me your heads." Two faithful disciples offered their heads.

Many people debate over the necessity for having a guru. Some assert vehemently that it is not necessary to have a guru for spiritual advancement and that one can attain self-realisation through one's own efforts only. No spiritual progress is possible unless a man gets the benign grace and direct guidance of a spiritual preceptor.

14 DECEMBER - RESPECT ALL: ADORE ONE

Competent disciples are never in want of a competent guru. Realised souls are not rare, but ordinary ignorant persons cannot easily recognise them. Only a few persons, who are pure and embodiments of all virtuous qualities, can understand realised souls, and they only will be benefitted in their company. The number of realised souls may be less in the present age, when compared with the satya yuga (the golden age), but they are always present to help the aspirants. They are always searching for the proper Adhikaris (qualified aspirants). Let each man take the path according to his capacity, understanding and temperament. His true guru will meet him along that path.

Do not dig shallow pits here and there for obtaining water, for the pits will dry up soon. Dig a very deep pit in one place and centralise all your efforts here. You will find good water that can supply you throughout the year. Even so, try to imbibe thoroughly the spiritual teachings from one preceptor alone. Drink deeply from one man. Sit at his feet for some years. It is useless to wander from one man to another, out of curiosity, losing faith in a short time. Do not have the ever-changing mind of a prostitute, but follow the spiritual instructions of one man only. If you go to several people and follow the instructions of many persons, you will become quite bewildered and be in a dilemma.

From one doctor you get a prescription. From two doctors you get consultation. From three doctors you get your own cremation. Even so, if you have many gurus, you will be bewildered and be at a loss to know what to do. One guru will tell you: "Do this." Another will tell you: "Do that." A third guru will tell you: "Do the other." You will be quite puzzled. Stick to one guru and follow his instructions. Listen to all, but follow one. Respect all, but adore one. Gather knowledge from all, but adopt the teachings of one master. Then you will have rapid spiritual progress.

The guru and the scriptures can show you the path and remove your doubts. Direct experience or direct intuitive knowledge is left for your own experience. A hungry man will have to eat for himself. No doubt, the guru's blessing can do everything. But how can one have his blessings? By pleasing the guru. A guru can be pleased with his disciple only if the latter carries out his spiritual instructions implicitly. Therefore, follow the instructions of the guru carefully. Only then will you deserve his blessings which can do everything. 377 Sivananda Daily Readings

15 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 1

Fear not, my child. In reality there is no death for thee. There is a means for crossing this ocean of relative existence and attaining immortality or the supreme bliss. I shall teach thee now Brahma-vidya (knowledge of the absolute).

Salutations to satchidananda para (supreme) Brahman, that glorious first preceptor, who is self-luminous, eternal, indivisible, pure, spotless, desireless, attributeless, timeless, spaceless, changeless, beginningless and endless.

That ultimate reality which is the support for this world, body, prana (life), mind and senses, which is the womb for the vedas, which is all-pervading and all-permeating, which is colourless, odourless, tasteless, nameless and formless - that something shines eternally.

Some indescribable supreme principle which is imperishable, unborn, undecaying, fearless, motionless, one without a second, ancient and infinite - that alone exists.

What is neither short nor long, neither that much nor this much, neither black nor white, neither stout nor thin, neither good nor bad - that should be understood as Brahman.

That which is neither subtle nor dense, which has neither caste nor name, which is immutable, immortal and bodiless, which is beyond the reach of mind and speech - that should be understood as Brahman.

Brahman is distinct from the gross, subtle and causal bodies. He is the soul of all. He is the inner ruler of all. He is eternally free. He is without action, and without motion.

Brahman cannot be defined. To define Brahman is to deny Brahman. The only adequate description of Brahman is a series of negatives. That is the reason why the Upanishads declare, "Neti-neti", "not this, not this".

16 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 2

Maya (illusion) is the upadhi (limiting adjunct) of Ishvara (God). She is the illusory power of Brahman. She keeps the lila (creative play) of Ishvara (God), through her three gunas (qualities), viz., satva (purity), rajas (passion) and tamas (darkness).

Maya is not non-existent because it appears, neither is it existent because it is destroyed by the dawn of knowledge. Maya - is 'not That'. It is an indescribable appearance.

Maya is neither sat (real) nor asat (unreal). Maya is anadi santam (beginningless) but has an end only for the sage who has realised the self). Maya - is suddha satva or pure satva.

He who gets knowledge of the self having overcome maya or the illusory power, will alone know what maya is, how it arises and is destroyed.

The five elements, the five tanmatras (subtle or root elements), and the various objects of the world are all products or modifications of maya.

Just as you can infer the existence of fire through smoke, so also you can infer the existence of maya through its various manifestations.

Maya is of the nature of mind. Maya generates different degrees of illusion. Maya pervades everywhere. If your mind is destroyed by discrimination and vichara (enquiry into the self), then maya will not afflict you.

This mind which ever hankers after sensual objects is the seed of maya. If the mind is annihilated maya will vanish. You will attain the state of quiescence. Brahma jnana (knowledge of the absolute) will dawn in you.

17 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 3

Avidya (ignorance) is malina satva (weakened purity). It is the upadhi (limiting adjunct) of jiva (individual soul). It is the karana sharira (causal body) of the individual soul. Avidya is anandamaya kosha. Avidya is a false perception by which the ignorant jiva takes the body and intellect as pure, permanent and a source of pleasure.

Just as a king acts the part of a beggar, out of his own free will on the stage in a drama, so also the satchidananda Brahman acts the part of a jiva in the drama of the world out of his own free will for sport.

Just as men with a defective vision behold a white thing as yellow, so does one perceive the self as the body on account of avidya or ignorance.

When one gets knowledge of the self, this avidya vanishes. It is the destruction of avidya that is the Brahmic seat.

Just as the mirror is dimmed by dirt, so Brahman is veiled by avidya. Therefore human beings are deluded by this avidya. Mind, senses, egoism, intellect and body are the efforts of avidya. If the cause is destroyed, the effects are destroyed by themselves.

This universe of names and forms has its origin in ignorance. It is dissolved by knowledge of the self. The universe, being other than the self, is unreal and like a dream. It is like a mirage.

Just as a snake is superimposed on the rope, silver on the mother-of-pearl, a thief in the post, city in the clouds, mirage in the desert, blueness in the sky, so also this world is superimposed on Brahman.

Just as it is water alone that appears as waves, ripples, etc., gold alone as ear rings, bangles, etc., clay alone as pots, jars, etc., threads alone as cloth, towel, etc., so also does Brahman alone appear as many universes.

Children regard a wooden elephant as an elephant, but the grown-up persons treat it as wood. Even so the wise behold only Brahman everywhere but the ignorant perceive the non-self only. The whole universe is within Brahman. It appears as external to you, just as your body appears external to you in the mirror on account of maya (illusion).

Just as a man doesnot behold the object, which he has seen in his dream when awake, so also jivanmukta (liberated sage) doesnot perceive the universe after he attains knowledge of Brahman.

18 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 4

The mind has the power of creating or undoing the whole universe in the twinkling of an eye. Slay this mind through vichara (enquiry), destruction of vasanas (psychological impressions or conditioning) and control of its fluctuation.

Mind is a bundle of vasanas (subtle desires). Through vasanas bondage is caused. Destruction of vasanas will bring freedom. The mind will attain quiescence like a gheeless lamp if the vasanas are destroyed.

Just as a silk-worm is caught in its own cocoon, so also man is caught in this vast net of samsara (worldly life) by his own sankalpas (thoughts and notions) and vasanas.

The enemy of the atman (self) is the fluctuating mind only. The mind through its power of fluctuation generates countless vasanas and sankalpas. Destroy this fluctuating power of the mind through constant Brahma-vichara.

Brahman will not shine when the dualities of the mind are not destroyed. Destroy the dualities. Brahman will shine in its pristine glory.

Ahamkara (egoism) which is the source of all troubles has its seat in the mind. Annihilation of egoism will bring about destruction of the mind and annihilation of the mind will cause destruction of egoism.

The ideas of 'mine' and 'thine' are only the creation of the mind. If the mind is destroyed through vichara, these ideas will vanish. Destruction of the mind alone is moksha (liberation).

Destruction of sankalpas is really destruction of the mind. It is only sankalpas destroyed beyond resurrection that constitute the ineffable, imperishable, and effulgent Brahmic seat.

Just as gold is purified by heating it on the fire, so also mind is purified by the fire of meditation.

19 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 5

As fire is concealed by ashes, sword by the scabbard, sun by the clouds, foetus by the amnion, rubies by the earth, mattress by the bedsheet, so also Brahman is concealed by flesh and bones. If you remove the ash you can perceive the fire; if the clouds are dispersed you can cognise the sun; if you remove the scabbard you can behold the sword; if you remove the bedsheet you can see the mattress. Even so, if the veil of ignorance which conceals the Brahman is removed by knowledge of Brahman you can directly cognise the self-luminous Brahman.

You cannot see the all-pervading butter in the milk, but if you churn it you can get the butter. Even so you cannot see Brahman by these physical eyes, but you can behold the all-pervading Brahman by the churning of meditation.

Purge your mind of all impurities. Sever mentally all your connection with visible objects. Destroy the weeds of desires. Abandon all sankalpas (thoughts). Eradicate the longings. Meditate on Brahman. You will attain soon the nondual Brahmic seat of ineffable splendour.

Understand the right significance of the 'Tat Tvam Asi' mahavakyas (the great declaration, 'That Thou Art'). The knowledge relating to the identity of the individual soul and the supreme soul that arises from mahavakyas like 'Tat Tvam Asi' (Thou art That) is the means to emancipation. The immaculate and supreme seat can be attained very easily if you possess equal vision, balanced mind and discrimination, if you associate with the wise persons and if you practise vichara or enquiry constantly.

One soon becomes that on which he constantly meditates with great intensity in accordance with the illustration of the wasp and the worm.

Negate the five sheaths. Control the senses. Sit quietly. Meditate always, "I am satchidananda svayamprakasa Brahman" (Brahman which is existence-consciousness bliss and which is self-luminous), which is the substratum for these five sheaths and the whole world. Keep up the Brahma-bhavana (contemplation of Brahman) while walking, eating and bathing.

You should ever be engaged in enquiry of Brahman, till you get Brahma-jnana (knowledge of the absolute). You should practise right conduct also. You should have association with the sages. Brahma-bhavana, the end of all vedas, will dawn of itself in you, if you generate the Brahmakara-vritti (the concept that Brahman alone is real) constantly from your satvic antahkarana (pure mind and heart) by meditating on the right significance of the mahavakyas, 'Aham Brahma Asmi' (I am Brahman).

20 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 6

Om is the symbol of Brahman. It is the word of power. It is the sacred monosyllable. It is the essence of all the vedas. It is the boat to take you to the other shore of fearlessness and immortality. Meditate on Om with bhava (feeling) and meaning.

You should make Brahma-vichara habitual in you by constant practice. Then only your mind will be under your perfect control. All the impurities of the mind will be washed away by Brahma-vichara. Enquire unceasingly: "Who am I? Whence came this universe? How did birth and death come? What is bondage?" You will be able to attain the imperishable abode of eternal bliss.

If you want to attain Brahman all longings for objects should perish. The more you are removed from objects, the more the effulgence of Brahman will radiate in you. You will never be able to go into samadhi (superconscious state) although you can sit in the padma or siddha asana for six hours at a stretch, if you are not free from attraction and repulsion, anger, egoism and pride.

Merge the speech in the mind; merge the mind in the intellect; merge the intellect in the witness of the intellect or Brahman and enjoy the supreme peace. Restrain the senses. Silence the bubbling thoughts. Drown the mind in Brahman, who is within. Now you can realise your identity with Brahman.

Acquire the four means. Control your speech. Annihilate all hopes. Hear the srutis (scriptures). Reflect on what you have heard. Then meditate. You will attain self realisation. Brahman can be clearly and definitely realised only through nirvikalpa samadhi. Samadhi ensues only when the purified mind is merged in Brahman.

When Brahman is realised by means of nirvikalpa samadhi, then the heart's knot viz., avidya (ignorance), kama (desire) and karma (action) is destroyed. You cannot have samadhi without perfect dispassion; you cannot have self realisation without samadhi; you cannot have perfect freedom without self-realisation.

21 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 7

He who thinks, "I am the body .... This body is mine... She is my wife .... He is my son .... I am a brahmana .... I am fat .... I am black .... I am a pandit", is an ignorant man. He is bound. He who thinks, "I am not the body: I am all-pervading, changeless, immortal, indivisible, self-contained, self-existent, satchidananda Brahman," is a wise sage. He is free.

He who thinks, "I did this work, so I will go to heaven; I enjoyed such and such a thing", is an ignorant man. He who thinks, "Prakrti (nature) does everything ... I am only witness .... I am non-doer .... I am non-enjoyer", is a wise sage.

The annamaya sheath (food sheath) is made up of the five elements. It has a beginning and an end. It is inert and full of parts. It is an effect of the five elements. It is full of impurities. Therefore you are not this physical body or the annamaya sheath. You are the witness of this body. Understand, therefore, "I am not the body. I am Brahman."

The pranamaya kosha (the vital sheath) is the product of rajoguna (dynamism, passion). It also has a beginning and an end. It is inert. It is an effect. Therefore you are not the pranamaya kosha. You are the witness of this sheath. Understand, therefore, "I am not the pranamaya kosha. I am Brahman."

The manomaya kosha (the mental sheath) is a product of satva guna. It also has a beginning and an end. It is inert . It is an effect. Therefore you are not the manomaya kosha. You are the witness of this sheath. Understand, therefore, "I am not manomaya kosha. I am Brahman."

The vijnanamaya kosha (the buddhi sheath) is a product of satva guna. It has also a beginning and an end. It is inert. It is an effect. Therefore you are not the vijnanamaya kosha. You are witness of this sheath. Understand therefore, "I am not the vijnanamaya kosha. I am Brahman." The anandamaya kosha (the bliss sheath) is avidya or ignorance, a modification of prakrti (nature). It is the effect of past deeds. It is endowed with changing attributes. It is jada (insentient). Therefore you are not the anandamaya kosha. You are the witness of this sheath. Understand therefore, "I am not the anandamaya kosha. I am Brahman."

22 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 8

A jivanmukta (liberated sage) who has reached the imperishable turiya (transcendental) state can never be affected by the pairs of opposites. He always rests in his own satchidananda svarupa (essential entity as satchidananda). He roams about happily.

A jivanmukta realises that he is beyond the three bodies and the five koshas; he is the witness of the three states; he is pure consciousness.

For a liberated sage who has realised that all beings are the self, there is neither delusion nor grief, as there is no second for him.

The sage who has destroyed all his desires and egoism, who is always calm and serene, equanimous, who does not see any distinction of form and who has freed himself from delusion or ignorance, shines brilliantly.

The jivanmukta rests with an unshaken mind in the all-blissful Brahman. He is free from all the modifications of the mind. His heart is pure like the Himalayan snow or the crystal. He is free from the distinctions - I, he, thou.

The liberated sage, the prince among ascetics who has conquered the enemy, ignorance, who has known the secret of true bliss, uses the palms of his hands as his bowl, and sleeps blissfully under the foot of a tree. The sage does not care for public criticism. He keeps a cool mind even when he is assaulted. He blesses those who persecute him. He beholds only his own self everywhere.

He whose mind does neither sink nor float amidst pains and pleasures is indeed a liberated sage. He has rendered his mind completely quiescent by identifying himself with Brahman.

The jivanmukta has a consciousness of body in the form of a samskara (psychological impression). The videhamukta has no consciousness of the body.

23 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 9

Thou art not this perishable body. Thou art not the wavering mind. Thou art not the indriyas (senses). Thou art not the intellect. Thou art not the causal body. Thou art the all-pervading, immortal Brahman. Realise this and be free.

Thou art the prajnana ghana atman (embodiment of wisdom). Thou art chidghana Brahman (mass of consciousness). Thou art vijnana ghana purusha (mass of knowledge). Thou art ananda ghana soul (mass of bliss). Realise this and be free.

Thou art akhandaikarasa Brahman (one homogeneous essence). Thou art chinmatra purusha (pure consciousness). Thou art spotless, passionless, sexless and bodiless soul. Realise this and be free.

Thou art timeless, spaceless, deathless, changeless, endless, beginningless, motionless, desireless, faultless and actionless Brahman. Realise this and be free.

Thou art indivisible, partless, and infinite. Thou art birthless and deathless. Thou art immutable and self-luminous. Thou art eternal, perpetual and self-contained. Realise this and be free.

Thou art anandamaya-purusha (blissful soul). Thou art chinmaya Brahman (pure consciousness). Thou art jyotirmaya atman (radiant). Realise this and be free.

Thou art distinct from the three bodies and the five koshas. Thou art the witness of the three states. Realise this and be free.

That supreme Brahman which is the immortal self of all, which is the beginningless entity, which is immutable and infinite, which is beyond the reach of mind and speech - that Brahman art thou. Meditate on this. Realise this and be free.

24 DECEMBER - MOKSHA GITA - 10

O my child! Hast thy delusion been destroyed? Have you become fearless now? Have your doubts been removed? Are you resting now in your own satchidananda svaropa? I have declared to thee the profound secret of vedanta, the essence of vedas.

O preceptor! I have realised the self now. I am verily that Brahman, which is self effulgent, one without a second, which is changeless, partless, formless, eternal, all pervading, the absolute and the homogeneous essence.

I am satchidananda Brahman. I am pure, infinite, unattached, timeless, motionless, deathless, decayless and fearless. I have no connection with the body and the mind. I am actionless, formless.

Salutations unto thee, O venerable guru! Thou hast saved me from the wheel of birth and death. Through thy grace I have attained immortality and eternal bliss. All my doubts, delusion and ignorance have vanished. Millions of prostrations unto thee, O merciful Lord.

SONG OF DIVINE LIFE
Gopala Gopala Muralilola
Yasoda Nandana Gopibala.
Serve - love - give - purify, practise ahimsa,
satyam, brahmacarya 'take satvic food', study Gita,
Have satsang, control senses, do japa kirtan,
Meditate in brahmamuhurta, know thyself.

Love all, embrace all, be kind to all,
Work is worship (serve all), serve the Lord in all.
Purify, concentrate, reflect, meditate,
Know the self through enquiry, "Who am I?"

Purify, concentrate, reflect, meditate,
Serve, love, give and be dispassionate,
Know Brahman, maya, samsara and 'I',
Behold the goal of life, Hae Saumya nearby (Gopala Gopala .....)

25 DECEMBER - CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Christmas is the great festival of Christendom. There is a spirit of joy everywhere. Men and women lay aside their jealousies and enmities for a while. They come a little nearer to each other - and to Christ.

Christ came and lived among men to awaken the Christ-consciousness within them. Christ should be born in each one of you - then alone you will understand spiritual life. Then alone you will try to live a perfect, divine life. Then alone you will realise the spirit of Christ, which is within each one of us.

The sacrament of baptism enables you to come one step nearer to this perfect life. The sacrament of confirmation enables you to come another step nearer to sharing his life, using his force and his love.

Now, you are a knight in Christ's service. When you partake of communion, you really partake of his very life. Thus the spirit of Christ in you is gradually being roused, and you are awakened to the higher life of Christ-consciousness.

Every day should be Christmas day for us. So bring the spirit of Christ into your daily life. Behold Christ in everything, in all beings. Cultivate sympathy and mercy for all beings. Expand your heart and embrace all. Greet the Christ, everywhere. Perform each day, for yourself, the Christ's mass. Remember that Christ is in the priest. Christ is in the saint and the sinner. Christ is in the dog and in the labourer. Christ is in all.

Every day is a fresh beginning. Spend it usefully. Beginning the day right will bring great success. The whole day will be well-lived. Begin the day at 4 a.m. Pray, meditate, do japa. Pray unto the Lord:
"Lord, lead me from the unreal to the real,
from darkness to light,
from hatred to love,
from impurity to purity,
from imperfection to perfection,
from disharmony to harmony,
from diversity to unity."

26 DECEMBER - MEDITATE ON THE LORD

Meditate on the Lord, the inner ruler, the indweller of your heart. The lotus of your heart will blossom; the sun of wisdom will shine. The darkness of the heart will end. The five kleshas (psychic sources of sorrow) will be annihilated. The three fires (internal, external and supernatural suffering) will be extinguished. Sins and samskaras (mental impressions) will be burnt. Vasanas (tendencies) and cravings will be fried.

Meditate on the eternal which is free from pain, from disease, from fear and delusion, which is all-filling, pure, far yet near, the birth place of the five elements, the final goal of yogins and sages, the source of mind, senses and vedas, the place where silence reigns supreme, where there is immortal bliss beyond thought, the supreme, glorious splendour where thought is dead, where there is neither noise nor fight.

Purity, humility and mercy are the rungs of the ladder to the supreme abode of my beloved. You may burn the ladder now - I will not come down any more. Rivers of honey run in this wonderful land and flowers do not fade at any time, I swim daily in the ocean of eternity. I drink the immortal nectar. Hunger and thirst torment me not. Exhaustion and fatigue trouble me not. There is no need of lamps and electric light - there is eternal sunshine. There is no fear of snakes and scorpions - this deathless realm makes everyone fearless.

When you have realised oneness, when you behold Brahman everywhere, can there be 'here' and 'there'? Can there be 'this' and 'that'? Can there be 'I' and 'you' and 'he'? Can there be one, two or three? One homogeneous, blissful essence alone exists. There is only one Brahman - the infinite. All dualities, differences and distinctions melt away. The seer and the seen become one. The meditator and the meditated fuse. The thinker and the thought blend. The knower and the knowable merge. It is the transcendental experience of wholeness, perfection, fullness, freedom and perennial joy.

Meditate on courage, humility, love, compassion, peace, bliss, serenity. First practise concentration on an object. Then concentrate on the idea of the object. Finally concentrate on the existence behind the idea. Meditate on completeness and spiritual perfection. To meditate is to go into oneself and open the heart, in silence, to the divine spirit. Meditate on the atman. You will see the light of truth, you will understand the oneness of all life.

27 DECEMBER - KEY TO PERFECTION

Meditate on the atman; you will enjoy peace and bliss. The more you grow in aspiration and meditation the more God-like you grow, for in meditation is the light of the Lord. Meditate and charge your battery by contact with God. Dive deep into the chambers of your heart through profound and silent meditation and bring up the pearl of truth. Meditate and retire to your innermost centre. Abide now in perfect serenity and the peace that passeth all understanding.

Fear, distress, worry, temptation and despair will assail you during meditation. Repeat the Lord's name vigorously and sincerely - all will vanish. Meditate amidst noise, study amidst noise. Discipline and again discipline. There will be no tossing of the mind for you. You will have a strong unperturbed mind. If purity increases, the body becomes light and the mind becomes cheerful. One attains greater balance of mind and the power of concentration increases. You enter into deep meditation. If for one day you do not practise meditation, you will lose much; you will not be able to reach the original spiritual height the next day. Therefore always be regular in your meditation. Enquire, "Who am I?" Find the seer, find the knower.

Meditate on satchidananda atman, the inner ruler, the indweller. Meditate on Brahman as support, greatness, wisdom, bliss and existence. The light which never fails is the light of meditation. You experience samadhi (the vision of truth) through the light of meditation. Moksha (emancipation) is very near to him who is perfect is meditation. Connect your mind with the mind of God through meditation or yoga. Your life will become divine, your life will be transformed.

Meditation is the means; knowledge is the end. Meditation is the process; knowledge is the culmination. In meditation there is struggle, striving or effort. In knowledge there is no striving. So long as there is meditation, the meditator is only an aspirant. When meditation ceases and the goal is reached, the meditator becomes the knower of truth - all meditation and effort cease. He is a jivanmukta (liberated sage). When you try to behold a tree, there is effort in the beginning of perception. Later it becomes a continuous stream of consciousness of the tree. So is knowledge of Brahman.

28 DECEMBER - JIVANMUKTA

A jivanmukta is a liberated sage. He is released even while living, He lives in the world, but he is not of the world. He always revels in the eternal bliss of the supreme self. He is the Lord himself, a God on earth.

The jivanmukta or full-blown sage is full of pure love, compassion, mercy, exquisite gentleness and hidden power and strength. Love and lustre shine through his brilliant eyes.

The jivanmukta has not a bit of selfish interest in him and is absolutely free from worries, difficulties, troubles, tribulations and sorrows under all circumstances. Even when pains and afflictions attach themselves to his body, exhibit themselves on his face, his mind never writhes under them or their antithesis. He is not a slave of his moods; he is ever cheerful and peaceful. His higher excellences have been perfectly unfolded; all divine attributes are fully awakened in him. Every one of his weaknesses and limitations is burnt in toto. He shines in his own pristine glory, in his own essential nature of divine consciousness. He radiates peace and joy everywhere. The true greatness of a realised yogi is indescribable. His eyes are inspiring and impressive. His nature. is magnanimous, his touch purifying; his looks are merciful, gestures illuminating. He is omniscient; he has intuitive transcendental knowledge and clear insight into the very heart of all things and beings. You will experience a deep sense of peace and harmony, great elevation and inspiration, in his presence.

The jivanmukta or liberated sage is absolutely free from egoism, fear, doubt and grief. These are the four important signs that indicate that one has attained perfection. The liberated sage is perfectly content, has unruffled peace of mind, experiences deep abiding joy and bliss, possesses super-sensual spiritual knowledge and has the ability to clear any kind of doubt an aspirant may have. Doubts vanish when one remains in his company.

The jivanmukta does not even care for the wants of the body. He is not afraid of death and has no longing to live. Mother nature is his obedient and sweet nurse, attending upon him carefully. Bodily wants come by themselves. Nature arranges everything for him beforehand, this being her responsibility. Balanced mind, equal vision, indifference to the pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain, censure and praise, heat and cold, success and failure - these are the marks of a jivanmukta.

29 DECEMBER - THE SAGE'S VIEW OF THE WORLD

The man who stands up to his neck in water has a twofold experience. His head is exposed to the sun. He experiences both heat and cold. Such is the experience of a liberated sage. He has double consciousness. He enjoys the bliss of Brahman, but also has the experience of this world. He is like a man who knows two languages.

Just as the pot in which asafoetida or onion is kept emits a certain amount of smell even when it is cleaned several times, so also, a small trace of ignorance still remains in the mind of a sage. The jivanmukta (liberated sage) has a consciousness of the body in the form of an impression in the subconscious mind. That is the reason why he eats and drinks. Though the instinctive mind with low desires is destroyed, the pure mind does not perish in the liberated sage. How will he be able to engage himself in worldly activity without an instrument, namely, the mind?

The phenomenal universe does not vanish from the vision of the liberated sage. He sees the world as a dream within himself. Just as the mirage appears even after the illusory nature of the water is understood, so also, the world appears for a jivanmukta even after he has attained self-realisation, even after he has clearly understood the illusory nature of the world. But, just as the man who has understood the nature of the mirage will not run after the mirage for drinking water, so also, the sage who is liberated will not pursue sensual objects like the worldly-minded people though the world appears to him. That is the difference between a worldly man and a liberated sage.

The jivanmukta beholds the one reality or God everywhere and in all things. For him there is no distinction between a rogue and a saint, gold and stone, honour and dishonour. He actually feels that all is himself only that snakes, scorpions, tigers, bears and lions are as much part of himself as his own eyes, nose, ears, hands and feet. He is one with the flower, sun, ether, ocean, mountain and sky. He has cosmic vision and cosmic feelings.

30 DECEMBER - SAGE'S BEHAVIOUR

A liberated sage is not a whimsical man, neither is he bound by the rules of scripture or society. And yet, he will not deviate from righteousness. All that he does will be in strict accordance with the scriptures or sacred books. He spontaneously does only what is good. An expert dancer never makes a false step. So is a jivanmukta (liberated sage) when he works.

The sage works without effort, without agency, without egoism, desire and attachment. Like a child, his conduct is neither good nor evil. The sense of right and wrong will be natural in him independently of scriptural teachings. He has destroyed all egoism, is above all karma, and karmas cannot touch him. He may, for the instruction of the world, perform works or refrain from forbidden acts. The jivanmukta does not care for public criticism. He keeps a cool mind even when he is assaulted. He blesses those who persecute him. He beholds only his own self everywhere.

His mark or characteristic is an internal mental state. It cannot be perceived or detected by others. The Lord uses him for His divine work.

A knower of Brahman or a liberated sage need not be a genius. He need not be an eloquent speaker, orator, lecturer or professor. But he is calm, serene and tranquil. His silence is superior eloquence. He has divine wisdom and intuitive knowledge. In his presence, all doubts are cleared.

Householders make a wrong judgement in deciding the nature of a jivanmukta. They take into consideration only the external conditions of a jivanmukta. Even educated people make mistakes in this regard. He will sometimes appear like an 'all-knower'.

He will sometimes appear like an ignorant man. He knows when to act like a knower of the self. Serve him with proper feeling and devotion, with spiritual thirst; he will impart the highest knowledge to you. If you approach him with a bad motive, he will behave like a mad man and you will be deceived and great will be your loss.

31 DECEMBER - A BEACON-LIGHT TO THE WORLD

The liberated sage, like unto holy waters, purifies others by mere sight, touch and the utterance of his name. Sometimes he remains unnoticed, while sometimes he becomes known to those who desire welfare. He eats food offered to him by pious devotees and burns up their past and future evils and impurities. A liberated sage or a saint is the ultimate source of knowledge of the soul. To keep company with a jivanmukta (liberated sage) for even a minute is much better than to rule a kingdom - his very presence is so thrilling and inspiring. Seek his company and evolve. Serve him with faith and devotion.

A jivanmukta may give up his body in any place, at any time. Just as the falling leaves and fruits of a tree will not affect the tree itself, so also, the shedding of the body will not affect the self which survives like the tree. His vital airs do not depart elsewhere for transmigration. They are absorbed in Brahman after the exhaustion of his destiny, the results of past actions that have already begun to bear fruit. He is freed from further births The jivanmukta is freed from the trammels of mind and matter. He is absolutely free, perfect, independent. He is absolutely free from hatred, lust, cares, worries and anxieties. Everybody surely desires this state of beatitude or final emancipation. It is the final goal of life, the end of all human aspirations.

The state of a jivanmukta is the be-all and end-all of existence. There is fullness in this state. All desires are burnt. It is a state of absolute and perfect satisfaction. There is no gain greater than this; no bliss greater than this; no wisdom greater than this.

There, at the summit of the hill of eternal bliss, you can see the sage or jivanmukta or a full-blown yogi. He has climbed the stupendous heights through intense and constant struggle. He did severe, rigorous spiritual practices. He did profound meditation. He spent sleepless nights. He kept long vigils during several halting stages. He persevered with patience and diligence. He surmounted many obstacles, conquered despair, gloom and depression. He is a beacon-light to the world now. Remember that he was also rotting in those days in the quagmire of births and deaths, like yourself. You can also ascend to that summit if only you will.

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